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THE CHARACTERIZATION TECHNIQUES OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

by

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A THESIS

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THE HISTORY OF THE  
CITY OF BOSTON



the history of the  
city of Boston  
from its first  
settlement to the  
present time

By J. A. Smith



## A B S T R A C T

In *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* Charlotte Brontë has employed the autobiographical form of the novel which involves a narrator who attempts to recreate her own life. Faced with the central problem of portraying these protagonists, Brontë avoids obvious means of characterization. Instead of explicit statement, she makes use of complex dramatic presentation, imagery and symbol, and finally, through the careful control of narration, of a varying temporal and emotional distance between the reader and each protagonist. These techniques, far from being simple, enable the reader to conduct for himself, in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, an absorbing and often subtle investigation into character.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Since the purpose of this thesis is to investigate the techniques used by Charlotte Brontë<sup>2</sup> to create the two central characters in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, this first chapter will attempt to establish a theoretical basis for that investigation. Theorists of the novel, unfortunately, display little unanimity. The vastness of the average novel, the proliferation of types and subjects, and an early critical disdain which lasted for the first one hundred and fifty years of the novel's existence as an art form, has resulted today in what is at best only an embryonic poetics of the novel. Far from agreeing upon a vocabulary to describe the elements of the novel, critics rarely agree upon what these elements are. The practical result of this disagreement is that the student of the novel has to define a critical framework that will be suitable for the works in hand.

To the end of providing that framework I would like to assume with R. S. Crane<sup>1</sup> that any novel is a composition of three elements: the narrative material comprising the characters, what they think and feel, and what they do; the kind of language in which these are created, encompassing questions of diction and imagery; and finally the author's technique or method of presenting his subject, including questions of point of view and the relation between scene and summary. In each case the author makes choices, and the final impact of his novel is the sum of those choices.

In his article "The Concept of Plot and the Plot of *Tom Jones*",





Crane considers a tendency amongst critics to talk about various elements of narrative material as though they could be considered independently of one another. He is particularly concerned with a confusion between action and plot. The two he says are not synonymous. Plot is not "something that can be abstracted, for critical purposes, from the moral qualities of the characters and the operations of their thought."<sup>2</sup>

When critics try to do this they are really only considering the action, or sequence of events, something which

can be pronounced good in terms simply of the variety of incidents it contains, the amount of suspense and surprise it evokes, and the ingenuity with which all the happenings in the beginning and middle are made to contribute to the resolution at the end.<sup>3</sup>

Plot, he suggests, is the "particular temporal synthesis," the unified effect of the three basic elements of narrative material: characters, action and thought. The people portrayed in the novel have moral characters, they experience events and reveal the nature of their experience by their thoughts and feelings. To judge any one apart from either of the other two is to ignore the fact that the author intended them as a unity and that we, as readers, accept them in their interrelated form, not in so many disjointed fragments. Besides, the words which express thoughts and feelings convey character and describe action. To concentrate, for example, upon the *action* of *Jane Eyre* alone, is to ignore its vital role in the delineation and development of Jane's character.

Crane goes on to distinguish plots of action, character and thought, depending upon which one is the synthesizing principle:

In the first, the synthesizing principle is a completed change, gradual or sudden, in the situation of the protagonist, determined and effected by character and thought (as in *Oedipus* and *The Brothers Karamazov*); in





the second, the principle is a completed process of change in the moral character of the protagonist, precipitated or molded by action, and made manifest both in it and in thought and feeling (as in James's *The Portrait of a Lady*); in the third, the principle is a completed process of change in the thought of the protagonist and consequently in his feelings, conditioned and directed by character and action (as in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*).<sup>4</sup>

Although the distinctions are probably arbitrary when applied to all novels, they are useful in defining the central interest in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. In these novels, Charlotte Brontë has chosen to create what might be called novels of character, but in terms of Crane's analysis what are better described as novels of thought and feeling. Both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* are vitally concerned with the moral nature of the protagonists, that is, what is essentially valuable to the protagonists, but the "synthesizing principle" of both books is the process of change which occurs in the thoughts and feelings of both protagonists. For *Jane Eyre*, a satisfactory balance has to be found between the demands of emotion and imagination, and a strong moral sense complicated by a morbid capacity for self-destruction; for Lucy Snowe, mastery over an even more emotionally insecure nature compounded by an overwhelming and positively masochistic introversion.

For Crane criticism cannot deal with one of the elements of narrative material independently of the other two. Good characterization, interesting thought and a cleverly constructed sequence of events are all relatively meaningless unless considered as parts of a unity or "plot". His distinction between plot and action, and his concept of plot will be of particular importance in Chapter Two of this thesis where consideration will be given to the particular way Charlotte Brontë has organized her basic materials of character, action and thought in order to convey to her reader the nature and development of her two heroines.



Having discussed briefly the basic narrative material, the next question to be considered is what use Brontë makes of figurative language. While little need be said here by way of abstract theory, the potential use of metaphoric language in the delineation of character should be noted. In both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* the great bulk of the material is presented to us as the direct product of the narrator's, or her earlier self's, mind. Description, summary, introspection and the narrator's speech comprise most of the words in the novel; only the quoted speech of others can be said to be in any way independent of her. Consequently, the choices of metaphor and simile can play an important role in defining the personality of the central character. A good part of Chapter Three will be devoted to Brontë's actual practice in this regard.

The third chapter will also take up the role of symbols in elaborating character. In *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, symbols are consciously created by the highly imaginative minds of the two protagonists. They seize upon objects or scenes, or imagine them in order to convey, by symbolic implication, the state of their minds. In addition, Brontë incorporates into the books symbols which suggest the nature of a situation but which differ from other symbols in that they are independent of the narrator's mind. The reasons the study of symbols and metaphors will be incorporated into one chapter are that there are some interesting tonal similarities and that sometimes the distinctions between the two are more arbitrary than real.

Perhaps the major critical discussion of this century having to do with the novel has been concerned with various aspects of dramatic or story illusion. For critics who have adopted and extended the theories of





Henry James, the technical purpose of the novelist is to convince the reader of the reality of his novelistic world. In the pursuit of this objective, initially propounded by Percy Lubbock,<sup>5</sup> the greatest quarrel of these critics has been with the novelist who is content to *tell*, or analyze for, the reader, in his own voice, the nature and significance of his story material. In opposition they state that the reader should, whenever possible, be *shown*, directly and with the greatest possible illusion of objectivity, what is happening. According to Lubbock:

The art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be *shown*, to be so exhibited that it will tell itself. . . . the thing has to *look* true, and that is all. It is not made to look true by simple statement.<sup>6</sup>

For the greatest impact, the reader should feel that he is witnessing the story as it happens and that he is, in fact, the sole judge of what happens before him. It is illusion, of course, because the author has created everything, and selected characters, events, thoughts, with the purpose of influencing the reader in a particular way.

The question of showing versus telling and the illusion of objective truth resolves itself into two related narrative techniques. First, narration can be divided into *scene* which is particular and immediate, and, second, into *narrative summary* which is generalized and distant. As Norman Friedman points out, scene is not merely dialogue:

In order . . . that the event be placed immediately before the reader, there is required at least a definite point in space and time. The chief difference between narrative and scene is accordingly of the general-particular type: summary narrative is a generalized account or report of a series of events covering some extended period and a variety of locales. . . . immediate scene emerges as soon as the specific, continuous, and successive details of time, place, action, character, and dialogue begin to appear.<sup>7</sup>

The important distinction between scene and summary is that scene *shows* the





reader something directly; narrative summary or commentary, conversely, has to be presented by someone:

Whether it is the omniscient author or a man in the book, he must gather up his experience, compose a vision of it as it exists in his mind, and lay *that* before the reader.<sup>8</sup>

The reader is aware that a narrator, whether the author in his own right or a character created by the author, has intervened between himself and the activity being presented to him. In scene, by comparison, the narrator, whether author or character, tends to disappear, leaving only the apparently objective facts of time, action and dialogue behind. Because of this dramatic directness it is held by disciples of James that scene or *showing* is a more effective illusion of life than narrative summary or *telling*. In fact neither is entirely dispensable and neither appears very often in a pure form. Scene and summary merge into one another. Even in the most impersonal of novels a minimal amount of summary and commentary is required.

A more profitable distinction between scene and summary in novels like *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, where there is a distinct and dramatized narrator who intrudes from time to time, is in terms of the different sense of temporal and physical distance established between reader and activity by the use of scene as opposed to summary. The objectively reported dialogue and action of a scene bring the activity of the novel immediately before the reader in time and space. Narrative summary and, especially, gratuitous comment only indirectly related to the subject, place a considerable gap physically and temporally between the reader and the activity.

The second part of the showing-telling question lies in the absorbing problem of who is to narrate any given story and what his point of view



will be in relation to that story. In their concern for story illusion, the Jamesian critics and novelists, beginning with James himself, focused attention upon the various types of narration which are available to the author. The reason for their interest in narrative technique and its relationship to the showing-telling question is their belief that the larger the narrator looms in relation to the story, the more he blocks the reader's direct, dramatic experience of the story material. Friedman comments:

If artistic "truth" is a matter of compelling rendition, of creating the illusion of reality, then an author speaking in his own person about the lives and fortunes of others is placing an extra obstacle between his illusion and the reader by virtue of his very presence. In order to remove this obstacle the author may choose to limit the functions of his own personal voice in some way or another.<sup>9</sup>

The general view of Jamesian critics is that the best type of narration is that which is most personal, in which there is most opportunity for the author to dramatize his material and thus present it directly to the reader either as dialogue or as the thoughts of the characters.

Other critics, Wayne Booth<sup>10</sup> particularly, have devoted considerable effort to pointing out the effects that can be achieved by more traditional methods. Booth feels that the impact of the novel, insofar as it is due to technique, depends upon more distinctions than merely whether or not the narration is dramatized. However, the Jamesian distinction between dramatized and undramatized narrators is important, even in Booth's terms, and a brief analysis of the broad types of narrative point of view will serve to distinguish the narrative methods of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* from other possibilities. Chapter Four will attempt to distinguish some of the finer aspects of their particular narrative points of view.





The major distinction between narrative points of view depends upon whether or not the narrator is dramatized inside the novel. This distinction resolves itself, essentially, into whether the author tells the story, himself, in the third person, or chooses to create a storyteller who is within the novelistic world and tells the story as his own experience. James added a new category in which the narrative point of view is restricted to the experience of a particular character or "centre of consciousness" but which involves third person narration like the undramatized authorial point of view.<sup>11</sup>

The undramatized point of view is *technically* the least sophisticated whatever else it may achieve. It is the author recounting his material to the reader. He is omniscient in the sense that he knows everything there is to know about his characters and has no objections to telling the reader the significance either of the characters or of the events. Whether or not this kind of narrator will dominate the novel as, for example, Hardy does in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, will depend upon the author's willingness to present his own opinions, in effect, the degree of his garrulity. The author may be, unlike Hardy, totally impersonal and therefore hardly noticeable. If he is, like Hardy, ready to criticize or moralize, then the reader becomes increasingly aware that the author's mind lies between himself and the story. For Jamesian critics, omniscient, undramatized narration is the crudest form of fiction, since the author, garrulous or impersonal, tends continually to strain the illusion of reality by thus interposing himself. He makes the reader too aware that the novel's world is illusory.

The narrative technique immediately becomes more complex with the



introduction of a character dramatized within the novel who functions as the story teller. In this case the author is denied any direct voice in the narration, and the character speaks directly to the reader. Narrative summary and scene are given as he saw and experienced them. The most obvious consequence is that the narrator has only an ordinary access to the thoughts and feelings of other characters. As will be seen in Charlotte Brontë, this is not as restrictive as it sounds: the narrator may be unusually perceptive and others may confide in him. In effect the dramatized narrator may approach a kind of omniscience. Also other characters may be used to influence the reader on behalf of the author. Jamesian critics hold that this kind of narrator is much less likely to destroy the story illusion of the novel because of his position within its framework, which establishes a believable link between story and reader.

Again, there can be much variation in the actual impact of the dramatized narrator depending upon whether he is only a witness to the main interest (Marlowe in *Lord Jim*) or whether he is the protagonist at the centre of interest. It is into this last category of the dramatized protagonist-narrator that both *Jane Eyre* and *Lucy Snowe* fit. Both tell their own stories and concentrate on their own moral and emotional reactions to experience. In this unremitting concentration upon one mind lies the great advantage of the protagonist-narrator form.

Like other dramatized narrators, the "centres of consciousness" are minds through whom the author filters the narrative. Like the protagonist or witness-narrator, the events and characters are presented through the perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of a character. Instead





of being given in his own voice, however, the narrative is in the third person. Action and dialogue are still presented as before from the point of view of a particular mind, but narrative summary is minimal and as unobtrusive as possible. The vast range of commentary and summary which is presented as comment by the undramatized narrator, or as the experience of the dramatized narrator, is transformed into the directly expressed thoughts of a central character or "centre of consciousness." The novel becomes a dramatization of his mind as it experiences the events and characters which appear before it.

James enthusiasts, like Lubbock, regard this type of narration<sup>12</sup> as the finest kind of novelistic performance because it combines a restricted, and hence more believable, point of view of one character with the impersonality of third person narration. There is no distinguishable voice telling the story. The result is the most complete story-illusion, the sense of being "in immediate contact with objectively presented facts."<sup>13</sup> In the final analysis, however, the author always mediates the story, always selects, arranges, tries to influence the reader's opinions and judgements. The differences between types of narrative points of view vary only in the amount and type of disguise the author chooses to use. And, as Booth has noted,<sup>14</sup> the strict impersonality of the "centre of consciousness" technique may sacrifice to the ends of story illusion reliable commentary which would clarify issues or subtleties otherwise obscured.

Although useful in defining the authority of the narrator and his impact upon the reader, the preceding distinctions focus almost entirely upon the contribution of the point of view to the reader's sense



of immediacy or story-illusion, in effect, how far distant in time or space the reader feels from the narrative material as a result of the kind of narrator chosen. Concerned that this kind of analysis is an over-simplification of the relationship between reader and narrative material, Booth<sup>15</sup> suggests that other kinds of distance may exist and that these have to be defined before the full impact of the narrative point of view can be understood. He poses a set of varying relationships among reader, author, narrator, and characters, and is concerned with defining the moral, intellectual, and emotional distances separating any and all of them.

Since the reader is not concerned, Booth suggests, with the author as a living, breathing creature, another term should be introduced to describe the presence of the author in the novel.<sup>16</sup> This "implied author" represents the moral attitude or the perspective of the real author as it is manifest in the book. If the author is successful he will eliminate all moral distance between reader and implied author. At the very least, the implied author represents the moral perspective the author would like the reader to adopt in looking at the material.

Of the relationships in which differences may occur, the most interesting is that between the implied author, who presumably carries the reader with him, and the narrator, or other characters, in the novel.<sup>17</sup> It is in this realm of moral, emotional, or intellectual distance as much as in the question of the narrator's technical identity that the question of point of view lies. If the obvious narrator takes one immediately obvious point of view but we, as readers, become aware that there is more to know than the narrator reveals, or that the narrator is faulty or





morally shortsighted, then the definition of point of view extends beyond merely defining the narrator and advances on to defining the difference between his obvious point of view and another one postulated by the implied author. Any discussion of point of view, then, must consider not only the physical and spatial relationship of the narrator to the narrative material but also the reliability of the narrator in providing information and in judging the moral work of the material he presents.

The organization of narrative material, the significance of figurative language and, finally, the definition of moral and physical perspectives have been introduced in this chapter as a general introduction to the particular practice of Charlotte Brontë in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. The creation of character, with which this thesis is concerned, might seem to be only one of the many goals to which those techniques could be directed. The works under consideration, however, are novels in which character is of prime importance. Not only does the reader ostensibly receive all his information through the medium of one consciousness but it is abundantly clear that the prime interest is the narrator herself. The two novels are autobiographies in which the spiritual, emotional, and physical lives of the narrators are laid before the reader for his consideration. To investigate the literary techniques used to impress the nature of these two personalities upon the reader is to look at what is central to both novels and to investigate all the major literary techniques used, not merely those normally associated with characterization. Where the character of the narrator is to be investigated, not just the immediate narrative material (Chapter Two) but its texture of descriptive imagery and symbol (Chapter Three) and the control of perspective (Chapter Four) must be considered.





## CHAPTER TWO

### NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND CHARACTERIZATION

This chapter will deal primarily with the organization of the narrative material of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* in the interests of characterizing the protagonists. Some attention will be paid first, however, to the particular techniques used by Brontë to convey information about character, including the explicit means used to characterize the subsidiary figures, and the protagonists.<sup>1</sup>

The easiest method of presenting characters other than the protagonist, and the one most frequently used by Brontë, is direct summary. For a relatively flat character like Adèle in *Jane Eyre*, a few brief lines sum up all that is needed:

She had no great talents, no marked traits of character, no peculiar development of feeling or taste which raised her one inch above the ordinary level of childhood. . . . She made reasonable progress, entertained for me a vivacious, though perhaps not very profound affection, and by her simplicity, gay prattle, and efforts to please, inspired me, in return, with a degree of attachment sufficient to make us both content in each other's society. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 137)<sup>2</sup>

Adèle is not central to *Jane Eyre* and remains vivacious but uninspiring for the balance of her appearance in the book. Brontë, however, rarely leaves even the insignificant without direct scenic presentation, and what Jane tells us about Adèle is confirmed by the child's actions. The brief appearances she makes in the next few pages are vignettes of her enthusiastic responses to the superficial. After putting on a new dress given to her by Mr. Rochester, Adèle re-enters the room in which he is waiting:



"Est-ce que ma robe va bien?" cried she, bounding forwards; "et mes souliers? et mes bas? Tenez, je crois que je vais danser!"

And spreading out her dress, she chasséed across the room; till having reached Mr. Rochester, she wheeled lightly round before him on tip-toe, then dropped on one knee at his feet. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 178).

Adèle is given no activity which does not verify the summary.

More complex and significant characters are fleshed out by the same means: summary of traits preceded or followed by scenes which effectively confirm the narrator's analysis. With a Rochester or a Paul Emmanuel, the analysis may come gradually, attribute added to attribute until the picture is complete. But with each accretion the same pattern of dramatic presentation, coupled with an explicit statement of its particular significance by the narrator, is used by Brontë.

Because of their positions within the action of the novel, first person narrators are theoretically restricted to the knowledge about others that they can receive with their own senses. According to the logic of the narrative framework, they are forbidden the omniscient view into the minds of other characters available to the third person narrator. In practice the narrator can be endowed with all the practical powers of omniscience by the use of one or two simple disguises. In both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* the two narrators are characterized as sensitive women and their character judgements are given as considered opinions arrived at over a long period of time. In *Villette*, having spent several pages defining Madame Beck's character and the nature of her method of administration, Lucy, in her capacity as narrator, remarks that "the sensible reader will not suppose that I gained all the knowledge here condensed for his benefit in one month" (*Villette*, I, 90).





of her narrators is to have them "read" the nature or the emotions of the person involved in his or her features. This device may vary in its explicitness. There is, for instance, in *Jane Eyre*, the subtle suggestion of forcefulness and pride actually embodied in the physical description of St. John Rivers:

his face riveted the eye; it was like a Greek face, very pure in outline; quite a straight, classic nose; quite an Athenian mouth and chin. . . . He might well be a little shocked at the irregularity of my lineaments, his own being so harmonious. (*Jane Eyre*, II, 139)

This description of St. John is merely the beginning of a series of accumulative analyses by Jane as her relationship with the overbearing minister develops. For lesser characters, however, where not much more than a brief statement of disposition is required, physical features are also used, as in this description by Lucy of a difficult student:

I looked at her attentively. She had a pale face, hair like night, broad strong eyebrows, decided features, and a dark, mutinous, sinister eye. (*Villette*, I, 97)

Although the reader understands that it is the student who is "sinister" and "mutinous," this information has to be conveyed by something the narrator can see, in this case the eye. That most expressive of organs is most frequently used to define character; it is in describing the "light" of the eye that the narrator has most leeway. Zerk St. Pierre, cold, self-centred, has a "frozen eye, of light at once craving and ingrate" (*Villette*, I, 157).

A sharp distinction must be drawn between the means used to characterize *secondary characters* and the means used to portray the *protagonist-narrator*. The choice of the autobiographical form for a novel such as *Jane Eyre* or *Villette* poses several problems for the author but none



so central nor so important as how the author is to have the narrator characterize herself as she has been. Since the narrator is the only source of information, the novelist either has to have her analyse her earlier self, explicitly, or else the author has to find more subtle means to convey the protagonist's character. Explicit characterization of herself by the narrator is a dubious procedure at best because it involves her in the uncomfortable activity of praising or blaming herself. Aware of this problem, Brontë rarely uses the technique. When she does, it is usually to have her protagonist-narrator reveal something about herself which she dislikes. For instance, Lucy generalizes about the significance of her fear of facing her first class:

If left to myself, I should infallibly have let this chance slip. Inadventurous, unstirred by impulses of practical ambition, I was capable of sitting twenty years teaching infants the hornbook, turning silk dresses, and making children's frocks. (*Villette*, I, 92)

Self-denigration of this kind is easier for the reader to take than self-praise, probably because self-praise too easily provokes the charge of hypocrisy.<sup>3</sup>

The simplest solution to the problem of self-characterization used by Brontë depends upon a difference in impact upon the reader of different kinds of information presented by the narrator. Whereas the narrator may have difficulty in directly characterizing herself, she is at liberty to report the speech of someone else who is commenting directly upon her character.<sup>4</sup> That she is able to do this is due to an important effect which will be elaborated in Chapter Four, but at the moment it will be sufficient to note that the reader does not usually remember that the narrator is supposed to be quoting the dialogue presented. Therefore,







as a source of direct characterization the speech of a character other than the narrator seems to the reader to be much more objective than the comments of the protagonist-narrator. Thus, Rochester comments about Jane Eyre:

Strange that I should choose you for the confidant of all this, young lady: passing strange that you should listen to me quietly, as if it were the most usual thing in the world for a man like me to tell stories of his opera-mistresses to a quaint, inexperienced girl like you! But the last singularity explains the first . . . you, with your gravity, considerateness, and caution were made to be the recipient of secrets. Besides, I know what sort of mind I have placed in communication with my own; I know it is not one liable to take infection: it is a peculiar mind; it is an unique one. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 183)

While Rochester does not say anything entirely new at this point in *Jane Eyre*, his remarks confirm Jane's character with an explicitness that would be questionable were it to issue from her own mouth.

Explicit characterization only helps the reader to focus the rest of the narrative material before him. Thus the investigation of the techniques used to characterize the protagonists of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* resolves itself into an analysis of the *indirect* means employed to that end by Brontë. The great bulk of this kind of information comes in two forms. First there are the reactions to events and other characters, reactions both immediate and subjective, and considered and therefore more objective. These reactions may be presented as the quoted thoughts of the protagonist or as description by the narrator of the protagonist's thoughts and feelings. Jane's immediate response to St. John, for instance, counters all her normal instincts:

I felt veneration for St. John -- veneration so strong that its impetus thrust me at once to the point I had so long shunned. I was tempted to cease struggling with him -- to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence and there lose my own. (*Jane Eyre*, II, 238)



Although she does not say so, the passage, along with others like it, reveals something fundamental about Jane's character: a capacity for self-destruction which contrasts with her equally strong desire for personal freedom. Introspection by the narrator, then, provides the raw material in this case, for the definition of her character.

Another kind of information, which is neither explicit characterization nor introspection, is the statement of moral or philosophical belief. Both Jane and Lucy have a considerable amount to say on the nature and significance of human existence, or at least of their own particular lives; furthermore, what they say at any given point is often in a complex relationship to their emotional states at the time. Lucy's statement about *life* near the end of *Villette* has only slight intrinsic interest:

Proof of life to come must be given. In fire and blood, if needful, must that proof be written. In fire and in blood do we trace the record throughout nature. In fire and in blood does it cross our own experience. Sufferer, faint not through terror of this burning evidence. Tired wayfarer, gird up thy loins, look upward, march onward. (*Villette*, II, 240)

Taken, however, in conjunction with the earlier statement about her relationship to life as shown in the following quotation, it betrays a remarkable change in her character wrought by her own suffering and the influence of M. Paul:

it seemed to me a great thing to be without heavy anxiety, and relieved from intimate trial; the negation of severe suffering was the nearest approach to happiness I expected to know. Besides, I seemed to hold two lives -- the life of thought, and that of reality; and, provided the former was nourished with a sufficiency of the strange necromantic joys of fancy, the privileges of the latter might remain limited to daily bread, hourly work, and a roof of shelter. (*Villette*, I, 92)

The gloomy expectation remains in the later statement, but it now reflects a healthier and more energetic stoicism which has come to replace the morbid







fear of life which characterizes the younger Lucy.

One of the significant developments in twentieth century literary taste has been away from the explicit definition in novelistic art and towards more subtle guidance of the reader's opinion; however, Brontë was no novice, especially when she came to write *Villette*. As a consequence, although the reader seems to be given much that is clear and simple and explicit, this kind of "telling" is mostly about secondary characters. The author leaves the reader to discover the complexity of the protagonist for himself. Description of the particular subjective feelings and of the changing thoughts of the central character are the primary means whereby the author creates her characters in the mind of the reader.

Having considered the basic techniques for providing significant data to the reader, the balance of this chapter will concern itself with examining the organization of that data, in essence, with the narrative structure. If, as has been assumed, the primary intention of these two novels is the presentation of the protagonists' characters, then all else in the book should be organized so as to evoke that character and to define or provide the means for the reader to define the process of change which the character undergoes. To this end Brontë has created secondary characters and has had them act in relation to the protagonist so as to bring out her typical reactions.<sup>5</sup> In fact, neither Lucy nor Jane does, or thinks, or feels very much which is not in direct reaction to other characters. Their primary concerns as narrators are with their own responses, moral, intellectual, or emotional, to other characters. As a consequence, these interrelationships become the structural principle for both books, and to investigate their nature is to consider the way in which the structures of the novels



are subordinate to their author's intentions.

The opening chapters of *Jane Eyre*, set at Gateshead Hall, establish what is to be an essential contrast in Jane between outer manner and appearance, and her inner strength and vitality. She is moody, introverted and determinedly dutiful, all aspects of her character which are manifest in her *behaviour* and which are presumed by other inhabitants of the Hall to cover a devious and troublesome nature. The standard for acceptable behaviour is established by the extroverted, selfish Reed children, and Jane is quite prepared to admit that if she had been more like them she would have received much better treatment:

I know that had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child -- though equally dependent and friendless -- Mrs. Reed would have endured my presence more complacently; her children would have entertained for me more of the cordiality of fellow-feeling; the servants would have been less prone to make me the scapegoat of the nursery. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 13)

As it is she tries to submit and finds herself branded and bullied for it.

As the ungraceful, unwanted child, she is subjected to a life of minor injustices by all the other inmates of the Hall, which culminates in a series of violent revolts against the people who will not grant her her true worth. These revolts establish quite clearly that strong sense of personal integrity which comes to Jane's rescue in her encounters with Rochester and St. John. They also suggest the strength of her hidden emotions. Young Jane makes John Reed feel that "he had closed with a desperate thing" and she meets the redoubtable Mrs. Reed's unfairness with a defiance which seems to Jane "scarcely voluntary," "something . . . over which I had no control." The Reeds have no real independence as characters; they exist only to establish the key aspects of Jane's character. Uniformly





blind to Jane's real virtues and indulgent of their own shortcomings, they point up that essential contrast in Jane between demeanour and soul.

Jane's interview with Mrs. Reed and Mr. Brocklehurst seems the worst injustice, and having borne meekly with the unfairness of her aunt and the hypocrisy of the minister, she turns and pours out her resentment in one savage denunciation. For the first time all the intensity of her nature is present in this expression of hatred, and it reveals to Jane, as to the reader, that depth of feeling which is the essence of her character. It is the first sign of her emancipation:

Ere I had finished this reply, my soul began to expand, to exult, with the strangest sense of freedom, of triumph, I ever felt. It seemed as if an invisible bond had burst, and that I had struggled out into un hoped-for liberty. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 41)

From this point on Jane's life becomes a struggle to vindicate her spirit, in a world that seeks to enslave it, and against a tendency in herself to accept that enslavement.

The Lowood scenes complete the presentation of Jane's basic character primarily through the agency of two characters, Helen Burns and Miss Temple. Her intelligence and sensibility obscured by the stupidity of those who would judge her, Helen Burns is in the same situation at Lowood as Jane was at Gateshead. Helen Burns, however, does not just exist to confirm the idea of virtue and feeling under a plain exterior. She throws into relief Jane's rebellious spirit by an attitude which is just short of saintly in its calm and humility. As she explains,

with this creed, I can so clearly distinguish between the criminal and the crime; I can so sincerely forgive the first while I abhor the last: with this creed revenge never worries my heart, degradation never too deeply disgusts me, injustice never crushes me too low! I live in calm, looking to the end. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 71)



Jane admires Helen enormously, and she provides the second part of Jane's emotional upbringing by reinforcing Jane's submissiveness against the indulgence of her feelings.

It is not that Jane accepts Helen Burns as her mentor, far from it. After yet another humiliation of Helen by Miss Scatcherd, Jane reacts violently, stating that "the pain of which she was incapable had been burning in my soul all day" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 91). Later, however, after Jane has fled from fulfilment as Rochester offers it, Helen Burn's influence upon her comes to the fore. Both Helen and St. John Rivers preach the destruction of the self and divert their feelings into a narrow channel which bypasses the broad emotional experience for which Jane is seeking. There is obviously something in Jane's basic makeup which almost relishes the sacrifice of her inner life; Helen Burns functions near the beginning of the novel to represent that martyr instinct and to lay the foundation in Jane and in the reader's awareness for Jane's near submission to St. John.

The conflict between fulfilment and submission, which is foreshadowed by Helen, is temporarily subdued in Jane by the influence of Miss Temple who, as a compromise figure, suggests the eventual resolution to which Jane comes. In the meantime with Miss Temple's influence removed, Jane feels that

the reason for tranquillity was no more. . . . now I remembered that the real world was wide, and that a varied field of hopes and fears, of sensations and excitements, awaited those who had courage to go forth into its expanse and to seek real knowledge of life amidst its perils. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 105)

Rochester and St. John are the dramatic extensions of the two impulses in Jane's character which are presented in the Lowood and Gateshead situations,





and not until she achieves peace with both in the form of a subdued and restrained Rochester is the conflict resolved.

The patterning of characters in *Jane Eyre* (1847) tends to be clearer and stronger than in *Villette* (1853), perhaps because Brontë had not yet matured sufficiently as a writer to be able to incorporate her themes into a seemingly natural sequence of events. It is not that some sort of realistic measure should be applied to *Jane Eyre*, but certainly one of the uncomfortable elements in the novel is the abrupt shift of scene in which Jane moves from Gateshead to Lowood to Thornfield and to Morton, each time encountering a radically different character, whose particular nature seems destined either to teach or test her. The same technique is also used in *Villette* but with much greater subtlety, especially after the opening scenes.

The opening chapters of *Jane Eyre* are specifically created to outline the essence of Jane's character and aspirations and to prepare the reader for the character conflict which is the real subject of the novel. As much will be seen in *Villette* where the protagonist's childhood is specifically used to fix an impression of Lucy Snowe's essential personality and to suggest the problems that will beset her as a result.

It is not merely to introduce Paulina Home and the Brettons that the childhood scenes in *Villette* are created,<sup>6</sup> although they certainly do that. After these opening pages the reader is left with a particular impression of Lucy that is hardly accidental. The focus, however, seems to be not upon Lucy but upon that half humorous, half pathetic child-romance between Paulina and Graham. Intense and serious as she is, even the smallest setbacks are potentially tragic for the little girl. Her sensitivity and



dependence provoke Lucy to wonder what her life will be like:

How will she get through this world, or battle with this life? How will she bear the shocks and repulses, the humiliations and desolations, which books, and my own reason tell me are prepared for all flesh? (*Villette*, I, 38)

The comment is interesting, not for what it says about Paulina but for what it, and others like it, reveal about Lucy's temperament, the hint of a morbid disposition.

In effect, Brontë commences her characterization of Lucy by having her appear before the reader as cold, not a little disdainful, above all withdrawn, aloof from the emotional crises of Paulina:

These sudden, dangerous natures -- *sensitive* as they are called -- offer many a curious spectacle to those whom a cooler temperament has secured from participation in their angular vagaries. (*Villette*, I, 11)

The purpose of this opening relationship with Paulina is to characterize Lucy almost by default. It establishes her fear of a life which she conceives to be without significant happiness by placing her in the role of spectator to a creature whose intense emotions would seem to Lucy to condemn her to a life of suffering.

The control of subjectivity in these opening passages will be considered again in Chapter Four, but for the present purposes we need note only that the relationship with Paulina establishes in a particularly effective way Lucy's acute fear of life and particularly of the life of feeling. By placing her on the periphery, Brontë gives expression to Lucy's withdrawn nature, and by making her spectator to Paulina, Brontë gives definition to Lucy's particular fears.<sup>7</sup>

The episode of Lucy's stay with Miss Marchmont is not important to the action of *Villette* but does leave, however, another impression of Lucy's





mind for the reader to contend with. Miss Marchmont has importance solely as she is the foil for Lucy's prevailing attitude and the catalyst for changes. The protagonist becomes totally absorbed in the old invalid, forgetting that "there were fields, woods, rivers, seas, an everchanging sky outside the steam-dimmed lattice of this sick chamber" (*Villette*, I, 42). And she is "almost content to forget it." The same diffidence before experience and the inevitable suffering that accompanies it is expressed in Lucy's gratitude for Miss Marchmont's strength of character and in her contentment with her sheltered existence -- "I would have crawled on with her for twenty years, if for twenty years longer her life of endurance had been protracted" (*Villette*, I, 43).<sup>8</sup>

If Lucy was soon to be thrust out into the world by Miss Marchmont's death, "goaded, driven, stung, forced to energy," Brontë was first interested in revealing another side of Miss Marchmont, an aspect which mirrors another potentiality of Lucy's personality. Beneath the drab and secluded appearance of her life, Miss Marchmont is revealed to Lucy as a model of stoic virtue rather than of withdrawal and renunciation. Miss Marchmont has loved deeply and suffered in the same measure through the loss of that love. She is the embodiment of what Lucy fears will be her own experience, but what she offers to Lucy is a fierce belief in the essential worth of her emotions, even when they lead to tragedy:

I have had my feelings, strong and concentrated; and these feelings had their object; which, in its single self, was dear to me, as, to the majority of men and women, are all the unnumbered points on which they dissipate their regard. While I loved, and while I was loved what an existence I enjoyed. . . . if few women have suffered as I did . . . few have enjoyed what I did. (*Villette*, I, 34)

Lucy watches Miss Marchmont achieve a final acceptance of her loss in the



consolation of religion: "I cannot . . . see the reason; yet at this moment I can say with sincerity what I never tried to say before -- Inscrutable God, Thy will be done!" (*Villette*, I, 45). In this acceptance, Miss Marchmont prefigures Lucy's future maturity,<sup>9</sup> and her death sends Lucy off to find the balance between the self abnegation and desire for effacement which is her instinctive defence against an unkind world and the deep emotional life of which she is capable.

Both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, then, begin by defining the source of conflict in their respective protagonists: the romantic imagination, the strong, often uncontrollable feelings, and the capacity for martyrdom in Jane; the essential fear of life in tortuous conflict with strong feelings in Lucy. Furthermore, both novels go on to situations and characters which prefigure or suggest the future course of the central character's development. Jane rejects Helen Burns but admires Miss Temple, that figure of serenity midway between Jane's emotional intensity and the other-worldly withdrawal of Helen. Jane throws off Miss Temple's influence initially, but it is to a similar calm that she comes herself after she matures. In *Villette*, Lucy Snowe admires Miss Marchmont but mourns her death primarily because it costs her her "morsel of affection" and a safe unexciting existence. Miss Marchmont's story, however, suggests the value of deeper feelings than Lucy has permitted herself and foreshadows, briefly, the stability of acceptance to which Lucy will also come.

The essentials of the protagonists' characters laid down at the beginning of both novels are picked up and developed by other relationships with new and more complex characters, whose characteristics and whose actions are constructed so as to accomplish that development. The independent





existence of these characters is limited for this reason, and they are interesting primarily for the reactions they provoke, emotionally and intellectually, in the protagonists.

The Thornfield Hall segment of *Jane Eyre* commences with a deliberate contrast between the unexciting inhabitants of the Hall and Jane. Adèle is vivacious but limited; Mrs. Fairfax is "a placid-tempered, kind-natured woman, of competent education and average intelligence" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 137). Jane, herself, specifically emphasizes her own exterior plainness: "so little, so pale" with "features so irregular and so marked" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 124). Knowing the inside of Jane's mind, however, we are also aware that her own characteristic propensities are stifled in their mode of existence:

I valued what was good in Mrs. Fairfax, and what was good in Adèle; but I believed in the existence of other and more vivid kinds of goodness, and what I believed in I wished to behold. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 138)

She longs for experience of life, for the emotional and intellectual experience of people and things she has never seen, aspirations which are meaningless to Mrs. Fairfax. In reply to Jane's queries, Mrs. Fairfax admits that Mr. Rochester is "rather peculiar," but to the housekeeper "it is of no consequence." Jane, then, finds herself almost as restricted as at Lowood and turns to daydreams to supply "all of incident, life, fire, feeling that I desired and had not in my actual existence" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 138).

But the strange "mirthless" laughter from the third storey suggests something else about Thornfield, and the arrival of Mr. Rochester promptly confronts Jane with her desired "experience" on as many different levels as she could wish for. Although he has not half the vitality of



M. Paul in *Villette*, Rochester is still the most complex of the secondary characters in *Jane Eyre*, and he poses some disturbing problems for Jane by means of his personality which brings out in her all those elements of her character which she has hitherto suppressed. He demands of her all she can give, and until he threatens to treat her as less than she is by appealing only to her overwrought emotions, she is closer to achieving fulfilment than anywhere else in the book. Until she realizes that the traveller she had helped back on his horse is her employer, returning to Thornfield seems to Jane like "returning to stagnation."

Rochester is only one more character, albeit the most important one, used in the development of Jane's mind and personality. Rochester's character and the romantic details of the Thornfield chapters, especially, have misled many people into dismissing *Jane Eyre* as just another Gothic romance. In fact, Jane herself is romantically inclined, and her world only sufficiently romantic to bring out those aspects of her character. As Robert Heilman has pointed out in "Charlotte Brontë's 'New' Gothic",<sup>10</sup> Charlotte Brontë goes to considerable lengths to undercut the specifically Gothic elements of the plot, employing to this end humour and a dry, common sense attitude on the part of the narrator. His point is, mainly, that Brontë diverts the stereotyped Gothic details from the evocation of crude thrills to the intensification of "new patterns of feeling." If Brontë wants to assert something in *Jane Eyre*, it is that a woman is capable of intense emotions and romantic yearnings after "incident, life, fire, feeling." In one of her rare appearances as *knowledgeable* retrospective narrator the older Jane excuses the "bright visions" of her younger self:





Women are supposed to be very calm, generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 139)

It is Jane's mind in which we are interested; and from this point of view, the Gothic elements, including Rochester as the dark-visaged romantic hero, take on the different significance of delineating that mind. It can probably be allowed, however, that the Gothic elements tend to overpower Jane. She is too plain, and Rochester and Thornfield smack too much of the Gothic. The result is that after the book is read, the reader tends to forget the continual focus of the narration upon Jane's reactions and to remember only the fiery details.

If this contention about the focus of *Jane Eyre* is correct, then the nature of Rochester's relationship with Jane should reveal much about Jane herself. Heilmann points out that "the love game borders on a power game,"<sup>11</sup> but in fact the whole relationship assumes the proportions of a contest in which Jane is forced to meet the standards set by Rochester. Intelligence, wit and talent all come under his sarcastic scrutiny right from the start. And when he is forced to admit approval it comes from a man unused to compliment and therefore comes with greater force. The long conversations between Jane and Rochester, in which Rochester outlines his own experience of life and Jane admonishes him to establish the strong puritanical streak which Jane carried away with her from Lowood. Rochester, of course, evokes in Jane more than just moral or intellectual response, but revelation of her strength in these respects is part of his function. Jane, we are to know, can meet and match the awesome Mr. Rochester in sense



and virtue if not in practical experience. Rochester, himself, seems to be well aware of this streak of stubborn virtue. In fact, the false marriage is designed largely to get around this aspect of her character. In the end it is primarily, although not entirely, this moral rectitude which forces her to reject him.

Most important to his relationship with Jane is Rochester's function as the object of Jane's love. Ugly, physically powerful, with eyes which are "dark, irate and piercing" he is created by Brontë to be sexually attractive to Jane.<sup>12</sup> She finds in him "the power of other qualities . . . to atone for the lack of mere personal attractiveness" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 169). She conceives of her feelings as taken from her "own power and fettered . . . in his" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 224). The long space devoted to the visit of the Ingram party is certainly designed to establish, from a more oblique angle, the depth and truth of her feeling for him. Blanche Ingram possesses all the physical advantages denied to Jane, but we are soon made aware that her attractiveness is only skin deep. Conscious of her inner superiority to her rival, despite the exterior plainness, Jane dismisses Blanche as "a mark beneath jealousy." Blanche, we are told,

was very showy, but she was not genuine: she had a fine person, many brilliant attainments; but her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature: . . . She was not good; she was not original. . . . She advocated a high tone of sentiment; but she did not know the sensations of sympathy and pity; tenderness and truth were not in her. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 239)

Blanche represents most of the attributes which are antithetical to Jane's character, and, as Brontë intends, lacks everything that is essential to Jane's character. Although Jane is aware that Rochester has a "perfect clear consciousness of his fair one's defects" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 240), her







belief that he will marry Blanche for her family connections provides a goad for her own emotions. Forced to be spectator of what she believes is the courting of a worthless creature, her own love for Rochester is forced into a painful fruition:

I looked and had an acute pleasure in looking, -- a precious, yet poignant pleasure; pure gold, with a steely point of agony: a pleasure like what the thirst perishing man might feel who knows the well to which he has crept is poisoned, yet stoops and drinks divine draughts nevertheless. . . . I had not intended to love him: the reader knows I had wrought hard to extirpate from my soul the germs of love there detected; and now, at the first renewed view of him, they spontaneously revived, green and strong! (*Jane Eyre*, I, 224)

Blanche serves little further purpose in the novel. She appears at Thornfield, shows up, by comparison with herself, Jane's characteristic vigour, and, by her flirtation with Rochester, Jane's deep attachment to him, then passes out of the action.

Both Paul Emmanuel and Mr. Rochester are portrayed as eccentric, even capricious men. While this is obviously part of their appeal to each of the protagonists, the eccentric characteristic affords Brontë the opportunity of having the two protagonists reveal themselves under considerable psychological pressure. In *Villette*, for example, this capriciousness results in the remarkable park scene, Lucy's fevered reaction to M. Paul's disappearance; in *Jane Eyre*, we have Rochester's almost brutal failure to reveal his real intentions which drives Jane both to proclaim her love for him and her independence from him. Thinking she is to leave Rochester she is "struck with terror and anguish." Also thinking, however, that Rochester wants her to stay, even after he marries Blanche Ingram, Jane is provoked to defy him:

"Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain and little, I am soulless and heartless? -- You think wrong! -- I have as much soul as you -- and



full as much heart!" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 17)

Not until she has dramatized Jane's defiant proclamation of her passion and personal integrity does Brontë permit Rochester to reveal his love.

The climactic scene of the false marriage and the revelation of Bertha Mason's existence bring out quite explicitly Rochester's dominant trait of dangerous emotions barely under control:

What a hot and strong grasp he had! -- and how like quarried marble was his pale, firm, massive front at this moment! How his eye shone, still, watchful, and yet wild beneath! (*Jane Eyre*, II, 65)

As Jane states, and as has been noted, Rochester fulfils her intellectual needs and therefore defines her capacity in this respect: "I have talked, face to face, with what I delight in -- with an original, a vigorous, an expanded mind" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 17). It is, however, as the embodiment of strong feeling, as the demanding and sexually aggressive lover, that Rochester most strongly attracts Jane. Her response to Rochester's appeal for her understanding of his situation shows quite clearly the appeal this side of his character has for her. It is the indication of her capacity for love and sexual passion without responsibility when she says,

"I am insane -- quite insane: with my veins running fire, and my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs." (*Jane Eyre*, II, 102)

Rochester "seemed to devour [her] with his flaming glance" and "physically [she] felt . . . powerless as stubble exposed to the draught and glow of a furnace" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 103)

"Intolerable duty" intervenes, and rather than sacrifice her independence and sense of moral rectitude to Rochester's emotional and physical appeal, Jane forces herself to depart. For Brontë to have left







Jane walking away from Thornfield "weeping wildly" would also have left the uncomfortable impression that the heroine's character bordered on the masochistic. Rejection of temptation in the interests of conscience does not require, also, a morbid satisfaction in the deed:

*I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more will I respect myself. I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad -- as I am now. (Jane Eyre, II, 102)*

It becomes fairly obvious that there is more to her flight than defense of her freedom and appeasement of her conscience. The reader is being reminded of the little girl who gained a kind of unhealthy satisfaction from the visions of evil conjured up out of *Bewick's History of British Birds* (*Jane Eyre*, I, 2). Faced with a demand upon her which she cannot countenance, she falls back upon the withdrawn nature of her early childhood, before the emancipating struggle with Mrs. Reed. The flight from Rochester is as much a flight from her own nature, to the relative safety of denial, as a response to the demands of her conscience.

From the rejection of ungoverned passion, she is led to St. John Rivers, embodiment of all the soul-destroying aspects of duty. Cast as puritanical and demanding, he is the means whereby Jane's fear of her own feelings and capacity for accepting the suppression of her feeling, is exorcised.<sup>13</sup> Proud, strong-willed and ambitious in the service of God, St. John is happiest when called upon to deny himself, to prove his capacity for martyrdom. Seeing him return from a late night visit to a parishioner, Jane comments:

Starved and tired enough he was; but he looked happier than when he set out. He had performed an act of duty; made an exertion; he felt his own strength to do and deny, and he was on better terms with himself. (*Jane Eyre*, II, 206)



St. John's ambition is cold and inhuman. He is "the servant of an infallible master," not "subject to the defective laws and erring control of my feeble fellow worms." Human emotions are "entanglements," "weakness" and "minor caprices."

St. John seizes upon Jane as the ideal wife-companion for his missionary future. He senses her own capacity for self-denial and suffering -- "you are formed for labour, not for love" -- and coldly tests its limits. Satisfied that in defining this aspect of her character, he has probed its essence, he tries to pressure her into surrendering herself completely to him, to submit to the suppression of emotion and the subjection of the mind in the yoke of marriage. Although she is aware that to say yes would be to "abandon half" herself, to "stifle half [her] faculties," she is almost swept away by him:

I felt veneration for St. John -- veneration so strong that its impetus thrust me at once to the point I had so long shunned. I was tempted to cease struggling with him -- to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose my own. (*Jane Eyre*), II, 238)

Jane knows that this "veneration" is the path to self-destruction, to the annihilation of her mind and feelings as the source of her personal identity. Caught up with the appeal of heavenly duty which she inherited from Helen Burns and urged by the fear of her own passions, Jane is prepared to sacrifice herself. Marriage with St. John is the rejection of personal fulfilment, the return to something worse than her childhood introversion, and the neglect of the whole drive of her personality since she left Gateshead. But the call from Rochester, "the voice of a human being -- a known, loved, well-remembered voice" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 240), rescues her from a soul-destroying marriage with St. John.







Brontë has been criticized for the reappearance of Rochester,<sup>14</sup> but in terms of Jane's character the return to a subdued Rochester is the sign of the resolution within her. It signals, for Jane Eyre, the return to the life of feeling, the fulfilment of her need for love, and the final defeat of that morbid tendency to withdrawal and renunciation which her early life had thrust upon her as the only alternative to emotional fulfilment. In St. John she defeats the ghosts of Mrs. Reed and Helen Burns.

It is primarily through her relationships with four other characters in *Villette* that the nature and development of Lucy Snowe's character is defined. As with Jane in her reactions to Rochester and St. John, how Lucy reacts to the characters of Ginevra, Mme. Beck, Dr. John and M. Paul Emmanuel, and how they act toward her are the primary means used by Brontë to organize the narrative material of *Villette* in order to characterize Lucy Snowe. Because a character of known values causes her to respond in a negative or positive way, it is possible to discern a particular characteristic of Lucy Snowe's and the gradual modulation of her character. It is significant that on two occasions Lucy herself compares the varying opinions about the nature of her personality held by others. Madame Beck "esteemed [Lucy] learned and blue," and Ginevra thinks she is "caustic, ironic and cynical." Dr. John Bretton calls her "a creature inoffensive as a shadow," and Paul Emmanuel "never lost an opportunity of intimating his opinion that [hers] was a rather fiery and rash nature -- adventurous, indocile and audacious."

Both Ginevra and Madame Beck provoke a similar reaction from Lucy: she feels herself inherently superior to them. From their meeting on the



cross-channel boat, Ginevra's flat characterization of light-headedness and frivolity, her combination of mental and emotional shallowness, serves to underline the determined seriousness and common sense which characterize Lucy when she is not emotionally involved. Typically Ginevra prompts that biting sarcasm, which Lucy can also occasionally turn upon herself:

a weak, transient amaze was all [Ginevra] knew of the sensation of wonder. Most of her other faculties seemed to be in the same flimsy condition: her liking and disliking, her love and hate were mere cobweb and gossamer; but she had one thing about her that seemed strong and durable enough, and that was -- her selfishness. (*Villette*, I, 103)

Ginevra floats through life, utterly unconcerned about calling upon the nearest person to meet her various and capricious demands.<sup>15</sup> As a consequence she also provides a contrast to Lucy's fear of presumption. Ginevra gets from John Bretton what she wants and then laughs at him; Lucy can only subside into righteous but silent anger at John's infatuation for Ginevra and leave her own love for him buried.

Madame Beck is energetic, efficient and uniformly good-natured but lacks what is fundamental to Lucy Snowe -- emotional depth. In her cold, unswerving pursuit of self-interest, the proprietress of the Rue Follette succeeds when Lucy fails because her character is entirely different from that of Lucy Snowe's. Determined and decisive, she acts when Lucy fears to presume. Without emotion, she acts without fear of remorse.<sup>16</sup> Lucy remarks, in the process of describing her:

I have seen her *feelings* appealed to, and I have smiled in half-pity, half-scorn at the appellants. None ever gained her ear through that channel, or swayed her purpose by that means. On the contrary, to attempt to touch her heart was the surest way to rouse her antipathy, and to make of her a secret foe. It proved to her that she had no heart to be touched: it reminded her where she was impotent and dead. (*Villette*, I, 89)







Later, fearing that she might lose M. Paul to Lucy, Madame Beck undertakes to remove her cousin from Lucy's influence by sending him off to the West Indies. In the process, having accurately gauged the extent of Lucy's timidity in advancing her own claims, she deliberately tries to prevent Lucy from seeing M. Paul. Unsure of his affections despite abundant evidence to the contrary, Lucy hesitates when he comes looking for her:

Madame was before me; she had stepped out suddenly; she seemed to magnify her proportions and amplify her drapery; she eclipsed me; I was hid. She knew my weakness and deficiency; she could calculate the degree of moral paralysis -- the total default of self-assertion -- with which, in a crisis, I could be struck. (*Villette*, II, 248)

Madame Beck thrives where Lucy fails because she lacks not only Lucy's moral sense but also Lucy's insecurity. Because of Madame Beck's presence it becomes much clearer that Lucy's suffering, the tense grief which always seems to be her lot in life, is largely, if not entirely, the result of her particular nature.<sup>17</sup> Madame Beck shrugs off Dr. John's indifference to her advances; Lucy, who does not even attempt to attract his attention, suffers for months from the same indifference.

Ginevra, Madame Beck and John Bretton are all foils for Lucy's weaknesses. All are eminently successful in various manners, in making their ways through a world in which Lucy founders. The contrast with Dr. John, however, is most significant in this respect. More than the others, he helps to establish her diffidence and her susceptibility to suffering. Ginevra and Madame Beck earn Lucy's contempt in varying degrees and consequently provoke in her a sense of superiority. Dr. Bretton, however, merits Lucy's only slightly qualified admiration and is used in this capacity by Brontë to point up the suffering which Lucy's near-neurotic



personality can undergo. First alone and then in conjunction with Paulina and Mrs. Bretton, Dr. Bretton emphasizes by the ease and assurance of his own life the difficulty and hesitancy of Lucy's.

However peculiar it may seem to the reader,<sup>18</sup> the withholding of John Bretton's complete identity by the narrator has the effect of reserving the full impact of his character until Lucy has established her shy interest in the dashing young doctor and her concealed chagrin at his interest in Ginevra. When Lucy awakes at La Terrasse, and before the reader knows that Dr. John is John Bretton, Brontë carefully reconstructs his character through Lucy's admiring recollection of him, prompted by a portrait:

Those eyes looked as if when somewhat older they would flash a lightning response to love: I cannot tell whether they kept in store the steady-beaming shine of faith. . . . I well remember how I used to mount a music-stool for the purpose of unhooking it, holding it in my hand, and searching into those bonny wells of eyes, whose glance under their hazel lashes seemed like a pencilled laugh. . . . I . . . pondered . . . how it was that what charmed so much, could at the same time so keenly pain? (*Villette*, I, 294)

The reader is given the full impact of Lucy's childhood admiration for John all at once and understands, from her words, that her feeling has changed little. Suddenly all of Lucy's vague hints at an interest in Dr. John come into focus as an infatuation with John Bretton. The sudden impact for the reader should be compared with the much more complex love relationship which slowly develops with M. Paul. With John Bretton, Lucy remains in the position of a silent admirer, and her inability to bridge the gap between them contributes considerably to her emotional instability. By comparison, the second relationship with M. Paul starting from equality continues that way to her benefit.





John Bretton is handsome, intelligent, witty and, above all, self-confident, but he lacks the sensitivity to the feelings of others which would tell him that Lucy was more than a "quiet, inoffensive shadow" and more than just a friend. Kind and generous though he is to her, it is a god's condescension to a mortal. Aware as the reader is, through Lucy, of John's character and the extent of Lucy's dependence upon him for her happiness, the contrast between the two establishes more strongly than any other relationship, both the potential depth of her feelings and the anguish she will suffer rather than actively seek fulfilment for them. For instance, left at the Pensionnat Beck by John, after her stay at La Terrasse, with the promise that he would write, Lucy undergoes agonies of hope and fear over the expected letter. When it finally comes, she is "happier than most queens in palaces"; "a passing seraph seemed to have rested beside [her], leaned toward [her] heart, and reposed on its throb a softening, cooling, healing, hallowing wing" (*Villette*, I, 310). When she comes back to the garret where she was reading the letter before being frightened by the ghostly nun, in order to retrieve the missing letter, she is near hysteria when she cannot find it. Into the middle of her crisis intrudes the kindly, but faintly amused, Dr. Bretton. Although he is characteristically indifferent to Lucy's emotional vagaries, he continually practices upon her a kind of unconscious cruelty -- only upon fresh tears does he produce the letter which he had hidden.

Nothing points up the cruelty of the relationship between Graham and Lucy better than Brontë's reintroduction of Paulina as the perfect counterpart in beauty, intelligence and refinement to Dr. Bretton.



Against Ginevra, Lucy could struggle; against Paulina whom she respects, she has no defences. She is forced to admit Paulina's suitability for Dr. Bretton. Their happiness seems almost preordained to Lucy, and she is sadly aware of the contrast they provide with her own situation. So effectively does Lucy mask the extent of her love for Dr. John that she finds herself, to her horror, confidant to Paulina and intermediary for them both. Brontë deliberately uses the irony of the situation to emphasize the inner torture which is the result of Lucy's fear of presumption. Considered only in the light of a friend, she is made the recipient of "tender, passionate confidences which left Paulina's lips, sweet honey and sometimes dropped in [her] ear -- molten lead" (*Villette*, II, 223).

Dr. Bretton falls into a narrative pattern which is similar in both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. Apart from those characters in the opening scenes who help to establish the protagonist's basic character, all the secondary characters except the important ones, Rochester in *Jane Eyre* and Paul Emmanuel in *Villette*, tend to emphasize the weaknesses of the protagonists. Only with their two lovers do the protagonists find relationships which fulfil their needs. Rochester, as has been noted, appeals to Jane on many levels, and is, eventually, the means to the end of her salvation. Paul Emmanuel functions in a more complex relationship to the protagonist, Lucy, than does any other character, and in a relationship of equality emphasizing the positive side of her character rather than the weaknesses she strives to overcome. Furthermore, with positive relationships comes development of the protagonist, and in this sense only these relationships are truly dynamic.

With M. Paul Lucy lacks the diffidence which is evident in her





attitude towards Dr. John. And there is much in M. Paul to attach him to Lucy. In her slow but steadily growing affection for him is the reflection of what is positive in her own character. Although she is given much reason for disliking him, she finds instead that his character reflects what she values. If he is overbearing and presumptuous, he also displays a surprising sensitivity to her feelings, something she found lacking in Dr. John. The deviousness which repelled her in Madame Beck is only a habit with M. Paul and is belied by a kind of naive innocence and honesty which Lucy finds enormously appealing. This same innocence is apparent in his faith which he follows with as much fervour as Lucy does her protestantism. She finds in him a constancy despite suffering and deprivation which reflects her own life and yet, unlike her own tendency to withdraw, an extroverted and unashamed expression of emotions which in their way are as strong and uncontrollable as her own.

M. Paul must be regarded as the catalyst in the *development* of Lucy's character. He draws Lucy out of her shell by his unreasonable and eccentric behaviour.<sup>19</sup> Because she is unafraid and feels that she is his equal, Lucy delights in meeting his challenges; exasperated by his unfairness, she is driven to assert *her* understanding of the truth. It is because of her love for M. Paul that she finally asserts herself against the cold selfishness of the redoubtable Madame Beck. More than anything else, it is M. Paul's love which enables her to struggle free of the debilitating fear of emotional involvement. Before this happens she undergoes one last plunge into the neurotic fear of betrayal. Brilliantly presented as a surrealistic dream,<sup>20</sup> her anxiety-prompted walk through the park leaves her convinced that she is doomed to lose M. Paul. He returns,



however, to convince her that love is possible even for Lucy Snowe. When he leaves her to go to the West Indies, she lives on her faith in him, having acquired with his gift of financial independence a measure of emotional stability. It is this newfound stability which enables the narrator, as opposed to the protagonist, to write with a measure of calm, the story of her life, and to state near the end of it, her acceptance of suffering in the context of the same Christian stoicism which sustained

Miss Marchmont:

Proof of a life to come must be given. In fire and in blood, if needful, must that proof be written. In fire and in blood do we trace the record throughout nature. In fire and in blood does it cross our experience. Sufferer, faint not through terror of this burning evidence. Tired wayfarer, gird up thy loins, look upward, march onward. (*Villette*, II, 240)

Although this statement comes before Lucy's last emotional crisis, it is identifiable as the expression of the retrospective narrator and represents her attitude rather than that of her younger self who still has one more trial to undergo.

It should be apparent from the preceding analyses of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, that the pattern of relationships is the key to the reader's grasp of the protagonist's character. Only through what the secondary characters are and how the protagonist reacts to them do we grasp the fundamental nature of the protagonist's personality and moral being. There remains only one more element in the narrative structures of the two novels, and it constitutes an important exception to the use of secondary characters as the determinants of the protagonist's character.

In both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* there are several outstanding scenes in which the protagonist is left largely to her own devices. These are always in some way climactic, the culmination of emotional process or the







transition between one emotionally charged situation and another, different one. It is always possible with these scenes to establish some subsidiary character as, in some way, the cause of the scene but in terms of their impact these scenes seem to be independent of the main structural relationships and to rely for their effect entirely upon the central character. Brontë wants to focus upon the central character alone in order to sum up the state of the character's mind before passing on to the next relationship or to a different stage of the same relationship.

In *Jane Eyre* the morbid and introverted aspects of Jane's personality, established certainly in the relationship with Mrs. Reed, are given forceful expression in the red room scene in which the overwrought Jane is left alone to face the consequences of her own personality. Later in the novel, her flight from Thornfield and her night on the moors, communing with benevolent nature, has the same purpose. The reader is permitted to see Jane by herself rather than in reaction to others in order that he may be able to grasp her general sense of desolation and despair without the complicating influence of another character. Both these scenes have their causes in the actions of other characters, Mrs. Reed's cruelty in the one case, Rochester's temptation in the other, but both scenes stand out so sharply that one must conclude that Brontë deliberately planned them for strategic points in the novels. The isolation of the central character and her appearance in the centre of the stage focus upon the reader's mind what has been happening in the previous pages. The purpose of this isolation can be seen in the fact that both the above scenes are transition scenes in terms of Jane's emotional progression. In the first she goes on to assert herself against Mrs. Reed, and after the second she will enter



into the relationship with St. John Rivers.

In *Villette*, three of these scenes are particularly impressive: the flight from England to Villette (Chapters VI and VII), the long vacation (Chapter XV) and above all the park scene (Chapters XXXVIII and XXXIX). The first is physically a transition, like Jane's flight from Thornfield, but is more important in that it describes Lucy's first emotionally unstable steps into the outside world by herself. Forced by Miss Marchmont's death to fend for herself, Lucy's reaction is to take a series of thoughtless and increasingly giddy actions which finally result in her arrival at Madame Beck's. Her exhilaration is unwarranted and, as she realizes, sometimes borders on hallucination. The long vacation is emotionally the polar opposite. Because she is left virtually alone in the big house which houses the Pensionnat Beck, Lucy gradually sinks into a despair which also produces a form of hallucination. Her already taut nerves are strained even further by the presence of an idiot-girl for whom she has to care. The result is that she gradually loses her grasp upon reality and finally collapses after trying to find solace in the confessional. The scene expresses the low point in Lucy's emotional life. Her expectations always conditioned by her morbid disposition are at their lowest point. Hereafter, her relations with John Bretton and Paul Emmanuel take up her interest.

It is the park scene which provides the finest example of the lonely introspective state. Lucy goes out into the night in a dream-like state caused by drugs and anxiety over M. Paul's unexplained absence. She is entranced by the idea of finding coolness for her fevered emotions in a particular pond of "clear depth and green lining." As in a dream,





she sees in her wanderings all the people who are vital to her life: the Brettons and the Bassompierres, Madame Beck with her cohorts, and M. Paul. In a very real sense, the happiness of the first group and the sordid selfishness of the second outline the nature of her own life, summing up the influences upon her. Finally, she sees M. Paul and returns to the house certain that he has deserted her, but determined to bear with the loss. In its role as a transition, the park scene signals the end to Lucy's emotional dependence upon others. She can, by the end of the scene, accept the possibility of M. Paul's defection without collapse. In another sense, the scene sums up her emotional instability before she enters the brief final stage of fulfilment in her love for M. Paul.



## CHAPTER THREE

### IMAGERY AND SYMBOLS

The central problem of self-characterization in the autobiographical novel was discussed in Chapter Two and the relationship between the protagonist and other characters analysed as the primary technique for elucidating the character of the protagonist. This chapter will give consideration to figurative language and symbol as further means of indirect characterization in Charlotte Brontë's novels *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*.

As I have noted, Brontë prefers to dramatize character, to portray it through dramatic situation: the two protagonists' relationships with other characters are fundamental to an understanding of their own characters. What those relationships are and what the protagonists do and say in the course of them, more than explicit characterization, forms the basis for the reader's grasp of the mind and feelings of Lucy and Jane. This same tendency to dramatize, on Brontë's part, makes itself felt in the remarkable figurative language of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*.

Both Jane and Lucy display imaginative and emotional sensitivity, but just exactly how this sensitivity is conveyed probably remains obscure until one investigates the emotional crises which occur in both books and analyses them for their figurative language. Although the emotional reactions of the protagonists are usually stated explicitly, they are also usually elaborated by extended metaphors.<sup>1</sup> Thus Jane, giving expression to her childhood fury at Mrs. Reed, says, "A ridge of lighted heath, alive,





glancing, devouring, would have been a meet emblem of my mind" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 43); her subsequent remorse is pictured as "the same ridge, black and blasted after the flames are dead" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 43). The use of imagery of danger in nature to convey the impact of emotion continues in her sensing of uncontrollable passion in Rochester, a "vague something," which disturbs and frightens her as if she "had been wandering amongst volcanic-looking hills, and had suddenly felt the ground quiver, and seen it gape" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 242). Later, when the full extent of Rochester's perfidy begins to sink in, nature seems to be inverted:

A Christmas frost had come at midsummer; a white December storm had whirled over June; ice glazed the ripe apples, drifts crushed the blowing roses; on hay-field and corn-field lay a frozen shroud: lanes which last night blushed full of flowers, today were pathless with untrodden snow; and the woods, which twelve hours since waved leafy and fragrant as groves between the tropics, now spread, waste, wild, and white as pine-forests in wintry Norway. (*Jane Eyre*, II, 74)

She then imagines herself waiting in a dried up river bed, helpless to move in the face of an oncoming flood. For Jane, however, the images of the burning heath and volcano are associated with excitement; for despair she reserves the simile of inverted natural order.

In *Villette*, although nature imagery is used by Lucy about herself, even more frequently than by Jane, in keeping with Lucy's often fatalistic character, it is nature seen as lifeless, nature against which man fights a losing struggle, or, finally, natural process seen as indifferent and inevitable. In the description of her trouble-filled life between the Bretton and Marchmont episodes, Lucy uses the metaphor of a ship fighting against a storm, a ship which eventually sinks and takes the struggling crew with it. Despite the exhilaration of her journey to Villette, Lucy pictures the suppressed anxiety over her dark future as "a tiger crouched



in a jungle":

The breathing of that beast of prey was in my ear always; his fierce heart panted close against mine; he never stirred in his lair but I felt him: I knew he waited only for sun-down to bound ravenous from his ambush. (*Villette*, I, 71)

The metaphor is almost redundant as description, but its insistent quality underlines Lucy's fundamental insecurity and makes her ecstatic happiness in her journey seem suspect and hysterical. Finally, at the beginning of the harrowing long vacation she finds life "but a hopeless desert: tawny sands, with no green field, no palm tree, no well in view" (*Villette*, I, 197).

The Brettons, by comparison, are associated by Lucy with nature, calm and life-giving. Time at Mrs. Bretton's seemed "like the gliding of a full river through a plain" (*Villette*, I, 2). Later that same lady is a "stately ship, cruising safe on smooth seas" to be compared with Lucy as "the life boat . . . only pulling to sea when the billows run high in rough weather" (*Villette*, I, 227). Dr. John's letter seems to be "the wild, savoury mess of the hunter, nourishing and salubrious meat, forest-fed or desert-reared, fresh, healthful, and life-sustaining" (*Villette*, I, 303). He, himself, becomes the healthful, life-giving sun:

Conceive a dell, deep hollowed in forest secresy; it lies in dimness and mist: its turf is dank, its herbage pale and humid. A storm or an axe makes a wide gap amongst the oak-trees; the breeze sweeps in; the sun looks down; the sad, cold dell, becomes a deep cup of lustre; high summer pours her blue glory and her golden light out of that beauteous sky, which till now the starved hollow never saw. (*Villette*, II, 1)

Later John's withdrawal from her life seems to her like a receding river taking life with it and leaving her "sand only" (*Villette*, II, 54). The bleakness of Lucy's attitude is represented appropriately in the images of beneficial nature. That she can see nature in these two ways reflects her







feeling that she has been selected to live a hard and miserable life. To the reader it is further evidence of the unhealthiness of her melancholic disposition.

The kinds of images, then, which both *Jane Eyre* and *Lucy Snowe* select in order to convey their emotional states may often suggest, as above, a bias in their feelings which is not always explicitly recognized either by the protagonist or the narrator.

If the nature imagery which abounds in both books, but especially in *Villette*, is often dramatic, the other extended metaphors of the two novels are almost miniature dramas in themselves. In *Jane Eyre* the bitter-sweet pleasure of watching Rochester with Blanche Ingram seems to Jane "like what the thirst perishing man might feel who knows the well to which he has crept is poisoned, yet stoops and drinks divine draughts nevertheless" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 224). Towards the end of the novel when she makes her hesitant return to Thornfield, hoping to catch a glimpse of Rochester, her expectation, crowned by the horror of discovering a ruined shell, is elaborately presented as a lover who approaches his apparently sleeping mistress:

now his eyes anticipate the vision of beauty -- warm, and blooming, and lovely, in rest. How hurried was their first glance! But how they fix! How he starts! . . . How he calls aloud a name, and drops his burden, and gazes on it wildly! He thus grasps and cries, and gazes, because he no longer fears to waken by any sound he can utter -- by any movement he can make. He thought his love slept sweetly: he finds she is stone-dead. (*Jane Eyre*, II, 247)

By inserting the metaphor before the climactic pronouncement about the ruin of Thornfield, Brontë carefully wrings every last drop of suspense out of the situation. The effect in this instance is theatrical rather than dramatic, but in *Villette*, when Lucy envisages the suppression of strong



feelings in Biblical terms, the metaphor is more impressive because it focuses less upon the situation and more upon the actual emotion:

This longing, and all of a similar kind, it was necessary to knock in the head . . . after the manner of Jail to Sisera, driving a nail through their temples. Unlike Sisera, they did not die: they were but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench; then did the temples bleed, and the brain thrill to its core. (*Villette*, I, 135)

Again, the metaphor measures out the effect bit by bit, ensuring that the reader will concentrate upon the agonizing repression it represents. All of Brontë's extended metaphors are used for the purpose of impressing a particularly important feeling upon the reader's mind by diverting his attention from the action of the novel to the emotion, by the elaborateness of the comparison.

More frequently used but similar in the emphasis they give to significant emotions are the personifications used by both the narrators, but especially Lucy Snowe, to describe internal conflict. Lucy describes the coma which occurred as a result of her nervous collapse, as the wandering of her soul:

She may have gone upward, and come in sight of her eternal home, hoping for leave to rest now, and deeming that her painful union with matter was at last dissolved. While she so deemed, an angel may have warned her away from heaven's threshold, and, guiding her weeping down, have bound her, once more, all shuddering and unwilling, to that poor frame, cold and wasted, of whose companionship she was grown more than weary. . . . she re-entered her prison with pain, with reluctance, with a moan and a long shiver. (*Villette*, I, 207)

The description is pure speculation on Lucy's part, but it accurately reflects her distrust of life and her particular fear that its inevitable concomitant is suffering.

Later, the alternating fear and hope generated by Dr. John's promise of a letter is recreated in a highly theatrical struggle between







self-punishing "Reason" who lays on her shoulder "a withered hand" and speaks with "the chill blue lips of old," and sympathetic "Imagination" who is "secret Help," "divine Hope" and who comes to appease Lucy's emotional hunger "with food, sweet and strange, gathered amongst gleanings . . . in the first fresh hour of a heavenly day" (*Villette*, I, 289). The unhealthy morbidity of Lucy's personality is given in the melodramatic conflict she envisions between what is simply her pessimistic assumption that John Bretton will fail to perform the simple act of writing a letter, and her hope, to which she clings with equal fervour, that he will, in fact, take the trouble:

Reason is vindictive as a devil: for me, she was always envenomed as a step-mother. If I have obeyed her it has chiefly been with the obedience of fear, not of love. . . . Often has Reason turned me out by night, in mid-winter, on cold snow, flinging for sustenance the gnawed bone dogs had forsaken: sternly has she vowed her stores held nothing more for me -- harshly denied my right to ask better things. (*Villette*, I, 290)

By contrast, "Imagination," which offers a hope, is presented in terms as euphoric as the description of "Reason" is bleak and dismal:

A spirit, softer and better than Human Reason, has descended with quiet flight to the waste -- bringing all round her a sphere of air borrowed of eternal summer; bringing perfume of flowers which cannot fade -- fragrance of trees whose fruit is life; bringing breezes pure from a world whose day needs no sun to lighten it. (*Villette*, I, 291)

The extremity of the contrast between the two and the belabouring of conflict reflects the fundamental instability of Lucy's emotions and the near hysteria which little things like Dr. John's letter can provoke in her. The next day she reverts to her original feeling of despair and her mind, given independent existence, is seen as

prohibiting under deadly penalties all weak retrospect of happiness past; commanding a patient journeying through the wilderness of the present . . . checking the longing out-look for a far-off promised land whose rivers are, perhaps, never to be reached save in dying dreams, whose sweet pastures are



to be viewed but from the desolate and sepulchral summit of a Nebo.  
(*Villette*, I, 292)

For a few seconds, the reader is drawn out of the mainstream of the novel's action and deliberately involved in a miniature sub-drama whose focus is Lucy's feeling at the moment. Rather than rely upon simple description of an emotional state, Brontë gives life to an emotional crisis by dramatizing it. The very theatricality of the personification adds to the reader's impression that Lucy is, at least temporarily, emotionally unbalanced.

At the beginning of the park scene, Lucy's fevered imagination takes literal command over her physical being:

"Rise!" she said. "Sluggard! this night I will have *my* will; nor shalt thou prevail."

"Look forth and view the night!" was her cry; and when I lifted the heavy blind from the casement close at hand -- with her own royal gesture, she showed me a moon supreme, in an element deep and splendid."  
(*Villette*, II, 255)

When she leaves the park, wrongly convinced by that same pessimism that she has lost M. Paul, Lucy invokes "Conviction to nail upon [her] the certainty, abhorred while embraced, to fix it with the strongest spikes her strongest strokes could drive" (*Villette*, II, 278). By giving feelings independent dramatic existence Brontë, through the narrator, has given expression to the tenuous control Lucy has over her inner self.

By comparison with *Villette*, there is only one notable use of personification in *Jane Eyre*, and that is at the crucial moment when Jane, having endured the attempted wedding, is left to herself to contemplate her future:

I wanted to be weak that I might avoid the awful passage of further suffering I saw laid out for me; and conscience, turned tyrant, held passion by the throat, told her tauntingly, she had yet but dipped her dainty foot in







the slough, and swore that with that arm of iron, he would thrust her down to unsounded depths of agony. (*Jane Eyre*, II, 76)

The device is used, in keeping with its use in *Villette*, at the moment when Jane is least sure of her emotions. Her indecision is projected into a struggle between personifications which seems to be taking place before her and beyond her control. The greater use of this technique of personification in *Villette* gives to the operations of Lucy Snowe's mind a frenetic quality which is missing in *Jane Eyre*.

The quality of the introspection of the two protagonists depends also upon images the individual impact of which is less than the extended metaphors discussed so far, but of which the particular characteristics do much to impress upon the reader the effect of suffering upon the hypersensitive nerves of both protagonists. While the incidence of mental misery is higher in Lucy, both narrators, in moments of psychological stress, draw upon images of torture, pain and death.<sup>2</sup> Jane's "cherished wishes" for life with Rochester lie, after the thwarted ceremony "stark, chill, lurid corpses" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 74); leaving Thornfield seems like "cracking [her] heart-strings in rending them from among Mr. Rochester's" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 78); her thoughts in leaving are like those of a man going to the gallows who thinks only of "block and axe-edge; of disseverment of bone and vein" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 107); and the thought of Rochester's self-abandonment, as a result, is like "a barbed arrowhead in [her] breast," (*Jane Eyre*, II, 108). In her largely unconscious identification with Vashti, Lucy compares her performance to "swords men thrust through, and dying in their blood on the arena sand; bulls goring horses disembowelled" (*Villette*, II, 7). Paulina's confidences to Lucy about her love for John Bretton are like



"molten lead" (*Villette*, II, 223) in her ear, and John's persistence in the typing of Lucy as quiet and subdued seems to Lucy to have the "coldness and pressure of lead" (*Villette*, II, 84). Mental stress is given force through the use of the imagery of physical torture.

In addition to the imaginary situations, the descriptive imagery, and the personifications which Brontë uses metaphorically to convey the emotionality of the protagonists, there are woven into the fabric of the two novels a number of symbols which play a vital role in elaborating the two central characters. These symbols can be classified, initially, according to whether they fall within the control of the protagonist or whether they have been included in the independent facts of the book in order to suggest the nature of the protagonist.

In both novels, objects or specific situations become particularly important to the protagonists because they realize or sense an affinity between these objects and situations and their emotional or imaginative states. The young Jane Eyre, brooding on the injustice of the treatment she receives at Gateshead, identifies her feelings with the descriptions and pictures in a book about birds. Her interest focuses upon "the solitary rocks and promontories," "the bleak shores," "forlorn regions of dreary space." The Gothic pictures she describes reflect her own almost unhealthy interest in suffering and especially the suffering engendered of loneliness:

Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children's brains, but strangely impressive. The words in these introductory pages connected themselves with the succeeding vignettes, and gave significance to the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray; to the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast; to the cold and ghastly moon glancing through bars of cloud at a wreck just sinking. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 3)

The state of mind which provokes this fascination is also reflected in the







red room scene in which young Jane makes of a flash of light from a lantern, the "herald of some coming vision from another world" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 15). Shortly thereafter her feverish despair causes her to react violently to *Gulliver's Travels*, a book that had previously delighted her. Its "giants were giant goblins, the pigmies malevolent and fearful imps, Gulliver a most desolate wanderer in most dread and dangerous regions" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 20). Thus the books become for Jane psychic mirrors reflecting only the morbidity of their reader.

The desolate shipwreck and cold moon of the bird book are strongly echoed by the three paintings which Jane created for her own amusement and which she shows to Rochester. Surrealistic creations, they substitute for the simple terror and fear of the book of birds more sophisticated suggestions of death, unnatural feelings, and despair. In the first the brilliance of the gems contrasts with a barely visible corpse in the "swollen sea"; in the second, the eyes of the woman "shone dark and wild"; and in the third the veiled head shows "a brow quite bloodless, white as bone, and an eye hollow and fixed, blank of meaning but for the glassiness of despair" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 159-160). Jane claims to have been "absorbed" and "happy" while painting the pictures, but their subjects and treatment resemble her childhood fantasies closely enough to suggest that she has suppressed, not defeated, the fascination with death and despair which characterized her early childhood and which reappears later in more subtle form in her submission to St. John.

Two situations stand out in *Villette* as instances in which Lucy finds outside herself something which provokes within her a deep sympathetic response. Both these reflections of Lucy's personality are people: the



King of Labassecour and the actress who plays Vashti. In both cases, accompanied by John Bretton, Lucy responds to something to which Dr. Bretton is oblivious. She feels a strong sympathy for the King who, she is convinced, suffers, as she does, from melancholia, "dark as doom, pale as malady, and well nigh as strong as death" (*Villette*, I, 269). If this recognition is Lucy's awareness of the same morbid tendency to despair in herself, the other person, the actress who plays Vashti, stirs in Lucy a passionate response which suggests a capacity for deep emotion in herself which she only partially recognizes:<sup>3</sup>

evil forces bore [the actress] through the tragedy, kept up her feeble strength -- for she was but a frail creature; and as the action rose and the stir deepened, how wildly they shook her with their passions of the pit! They wrote HELL on her straight, haughty brow. . . .

It was a marvellous sight: a mighty revelation.

It was a spectacle low, horrible, immoral. (*Villette*, II, 7)

There is an obvious relish in her description of Vashti, as though the suffering portrayed, and by extension, her own suffering, were somehow appealing to her. Her reaction reveals a capacity for hate and rage which contrasts strongly with the cool, if curious, Dr. Bretton beside her.

In *Jane Eyre* and in *Villette* dreams are a product of the protagonist's mind and play an important but different role in each novel. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane's recurring dreams involving a child are a manifestation of her unstated anxiety over the prospective marriage. The child is suggestive of her fear of desertion and betrayal, her realization that, in Mrs. Fairfax's words, "gentlemen in [Rochester's] station are not accustomed to marry their governesses" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 33). Despite R. B. Heilman's emphasis upon the dreams as an expression of anxiety,<sup>4</sup> they are also undeniably premonitions of the disaster to follow. Brontë makes quite sure that the reader under-







stands that they are warnings as well as manifestations of a particular mental state. The perceptive reader will recall that several chapters earlier Jane remembers Bessie Leaven saying "that to dream of children was a sure sign of trouble." This pronouncement itself is preceded by Jane's earnest discussion of the possibility of "presentiments."

Her later dreams about Mr. Rochester, after she has left him, reveal the intense attraction he still has for her:

I used to rush into strange dreams at night: dreams many-coloured, agitated, full of the ideal, the stirring, the stormy -- dreams where, amidst unusual scenes, charged with adventure, with agitating risk and romantic chance, I still again and again met Mr. Rochester, always at some exciting crisis; and then the sense of being in his arms, hearing his voice, meeting his eye, touching his hand and cheek, loving him, being loved by him -- the hope of passing a lifetime at his side, would be renewed, with all its first force and fire. (*Jane Eyre*, II, 169)

The dream is a useful reminder that her *renunciation* of Rochester was largely moral rather than emotional and that her love still seethes below her quiet demeanour and in contrast to St. John's appeal.

The use made by Brontë of dreams is vastly different in *Villette* from that in *Jane Eyre*. Only on two occasions do they really achieve importance and in neither case are they symbolic of events to come. During the long vacation (Chapter XV), at the very depth of her despair, Lucy Snowe experiences a dream which not only mirrors her vitiating fear that for her suffering is inevitable but also carries that fear into the next world.

Between twelve and one that night a cup was forced to my lips, black, strong, strange, drawn from no well, but filled up seething from a bottomless and boundless sea. Suffering, brewed in temporal or calculable measure, and mixed for mortal lips, not as this suffering tasted. . . . Methought the well-loved dead, who had loved *me* well in life, met me elsewhere, alienated: galled was my inmost spirit with an unutterable sense of despair about the future. Motive there was none why I should try to recover or wish to live; and yet quite unendurable was the pitiless and haughty voice in which Death



challenged me to engage his unknown terrors. (*Villette*, I, 200)

What distinguishes the treatment of the long vacation is that dream and reality merge. Brontë intensifies Lucy's failing grasp on reality by turning Lucy's perception of the world into a nightmare:

The solitude and the stillness of the long dormitory could not be borne any longer; the ghastly white beds were turning into spectres -- the coronal of each became a death's head, huge and sun-bleached -- dead dreams of an elder world and mightier race lay frozen in their wide gaping eye-holes. (*Villette*, I, 201)

The same sense of an inevitable and eternal dearth of human warmth and affection pervades both dream and hallucination.

The park scene (Chapters XXXVIII and XXXIX) achieves its remarkable effect<sup>5</sup> because it is largely cast as a dream. Having suffered for two days from a crippling anxiety over M. Paul's disappearance, Lucy's drug-heightened imagination brings her a "strange vision of Villette" (*Villette*, II, 256). She wanders off to the park in search of a stone basin, "deep-set in the tree-shadows, brimming with cool water, clear with a green leafy, rushy bed," to cool her fevered mind (*Villette*, II, 256). Instead, she finds herself plunged "with the suddenness of magic" (*Villette*, II, 258) into a joyful crowd. The scene seems "stranger than dreams," "a land of enchantment . . . a plain sprinkled with coloured meteors, a forest with sparks of purple and ruby and golden fire gemming the foliage" (*Villette*, II, 259). As in a dream "every shape was wavering, every movement floating, every voice echo-like -- half mocking, half uncertain" (*Villette*, II, 260); and the sounds are "as a sea breaking into song with all its waves" (*Villette*, I, 201). As in a dream Lucy feels that there is a "shadow of mystery" over the park, that "actions and incidents unlooked-for waited behind the scenes" (*Villette*, I, 266).







Brontë is able both to enhance the dream effect and to create a climactic confrontation between Lucy and the people who help to define her character. Dreams permit the breaking of logic and probability, and, taking full advantage of the licence, Brontë has Lucy see in turn the Bassompierres and the Brettons, Mme. Beck with her allies, and M. Paul. Significantly Lucy is able to accept with a reasonable degree of equanimity that John Bretton has only "one little place" in his heart for her and that Mrs. Bretton can still only see her as "steady little Lucy." Lucy refuses to quail before the unholy trio of Mme. Beck, Mme. Walravens and Père Silas and resigns herself to the assumption (wrong as it turns out) that she will lose M. Paul to his ward, Justine Marie. The effect of the scene is modulated gradually from dream to reality as Lucy realizes that what she is seeing is actually a carnival. She also advances emotionally, at the same time, from the fevered anguish in the dormitory to the calm acceptance of the worst possible interpretation of M. Paul's behaviour, that is, that she has lost another battle for love and affection.

One of the most important "mirrors" in which the protagonists of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* find reflections of their states of mind is that of external nature. Jane's romantic yearning for experience, for instance, is given expression through her description of the "hilly horizons" of Lowood:

My eye passed all other objects to rest on those most remote, the blue peaks: it was those I longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground, exile limits. I traced the white road winding round the base of one mountain, and vanishing in a gorge between two: how I longed to follow it further! (*Jane Eyre*, I, 105)

Later, at Thornfield, before Rochester arrives, she escapes from the limited



company of Mrs. Fairfax and Adèle to the roof of the Hall and looks "out of an ever sequestered field and hill, and along dim sky-line," longing "for a power of vision which might overpass that limit" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 138).

Both Jane and Lucy give expression to wild excitement in reaction to storms. Looking out of a window at Lowood, a rebellious and vindictive Jane thrives on the contrast between the "gleeful tumult within" and "the disconsolate moan of the wind outside" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 66). Rather than feel homesick, her sense of liberation, physically and spiritually, from Mrs. Reed leads her to wish "the wind to move more wildly, the gloom to deepen to darkness and the confusion to rise to clamour" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 66). Lucy also gives vent to suppressed emotions by remembering a violent storm which "took hold of [her] with tyranny" (*Villette*, I, 134):

It was wet, it was wild, it was pitch dark. . . . too resistless was the delight of staying with the wild hour, black and full of thunder, pealing out such an ode as language never delivered to man -- too terribly glorious, the spectacle of clouds, split and pierced by white and blinding bolts. (*Villette*, I, 135)

Although now generally subdued, for a few moments Lucy relives the storm and thereby reveals a hitherto well hidden depth of imagination and feeling.

Having considered the means which are ostensibly within the control of the protagonists or which are identifiable as the products of their minds, it is necessary to consider the author's creation of symbolic elements which exist independently of the protagonist, or at least, of the protagonist's consciousness of them as symbols. In the discussion above, nature was considered as it is consciously used by the protagonists to reflect a state of mind. To commence the ensuing analysis, the evocative correspondence, especially in *Jane Eyre*, between the mood of the natural





setting and the mood of the protagonist should be considered.<sup>6</sup> The "drear November day" with its "pale blank of mist and cloud" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 2) upon which the young Jane looks matches her feeling of quiet misery and inturnd despair at the beginning of the novel. A little later, drained of all feelings except remorse after verbally attacking Mrs. Reed, she walks out into a bleak, lifeless, autumn day. In fact, almost the entire Gateshead and Lowood sections of *Jane Eyre*, with the misery they hold for Jane, take place over one winter; the spring which is described in considerable detail heralds, through the paradoxical agency of the typhus epidemic, emancipation for both Jane and Helen Burns. Later, when Jane is returning from Gateshead to Thornfield and Rochester with whom she is in love, the weather is warm and beautiful (*Jane Eyre*, II, 4), suggesting her own happiness at the prospect. Likewise, her happiness at Rochester's proposal is matched by a beautiful morning. By contrast, worried by Rochester's absence and her foreboding dreams just prior to the marriage, her anxiety is accompanied by a storm. The sympathetic technique and its contribution of atmosphere to match mood is much more typical of *Jane Eyre* than of *Villette*. Only on one or two occasions, as for instance when Lucy's visit to the sinister Mme. Walravens is accompanied by a storm, is the technique used in *Villette*.

In addition to landscapes and weather, which are more evocative than symbolic, key symbols are used to elucidate character in both novels. *Villette* has such a symbol in the mysterious nun. Not only nun but ghost, she is in a double sense, a symbol of living death and extremely appropriate to Lucy's fear of emotional involvement, which, if it were allowed reign, would incarcerate Lucy in a kind of emotional death-in-life. The nun comes



between Lucy and love on several occasions: she is the cause of Lucy losing her letter from Dr. John; it is under her tree that Lucy buries all her letters from John; and she is strongly associated with Justine Marie, M. Paul's long dead lover who was also a nun and who, Mme. Beck suggests, still commands his allegiance. On one occasion M. Paul, himself, wonders if the nun-ghost is really his previous lover and if she is attempting to come between him and Lucy. Finally, it is M. Paul's ward, the niece and namesake of Justine Marie, who appears in the park scene and causes Lucy to believe that she has lost M. Paul to her. Significantly, it is at the end of the park scene that Lucy conquers her fear sufficiently to find out that the ghost was only a practical joke. Her "defeat" of the nun-ghost corresponds to the new emotional strength she displays during her nocturnal wandering in the park.

A comparable symbol in *Jane Eyre* is Bertha Mason.<sup>7</sup> The first Mrs. Rochester is so closely connected to Rochester, that much of the mystery surrounding Rochester must be to her credit. Bertha is mad, the epitome of physical passion without any control whatsoever. When Jane sees her after the attempted marriage, she does not know at first whether Bertha is "beast or human being." She watches as "it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 70). From the beginning of Bertha's relationship with Rochester, her sins were grossness and sexual promiscuity, as Rochester points out:

her vices sprang up fast and rank; they were so strong only cruelty could check them and I would not use cruelty. What a pigmy intellect she had -- and what giant propensities! How fearful were the curses those propensities entailed on me! Bertha Mason . . . dragged me through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste. (*Jane Eyre*, II, 88)





If Rochester suffered, we should remember that he had been attracted and married to Bertha for her physical charms -- "my senses were excited, and being ignorant, raw and inexperienced, I thought I loved her" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 86). Bertha's chilling laughter echoes eerily behind Rochester's budding relationship with Jane, and she is the direct cause of his desperate treatment of Jane. Because of these associations with Rochester, his first wife becomes a concrete symbol of the worst potentialities of his own passionate nature. Bertha's symbolic ripping of the marriage veil suggests Rochester's attempt to gratify his passions by the false marriage. Rochester's own nature has a lot to do with explaining Jane's inner drives. It is to Rochester, after all, that she is most strongly attracted.

As one means of impressing upon the reader his passionate appeal for Jane, Rochester is continually associated with fire, traditional symbol of lust. The first change that Jane notices in Thornfield Hall after Rochester's initial arrival is the fire prepared for him in the drawing room (*Jane Eyre*, I, 148); several of their subsequent encounters, including the one in which Rochester, disguised as a gypsy, reveals his strong interest in Jane take place before this fire (*Jane Eyre*, I, 253). Eyes, I have suggested, are often a clue to character in Brontë (Chapter Two); Mr. Rochester's often "blaze," "flame" and "flash," Just after the interruption of the marriage, his "eye was both spark and flint" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 66), and his "hueless forehead received a glow, as from spreading, ascending heart-fire" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 67). Bertha Mason is symbolically bound to Rochester through fire: she tries to murder him by setting his bed on fire (*Jane Eyre*, I, 190), and she kills herself and wounds him in the fire with which she destroys Thornfield Hall.<sup>8</sup> Jane's physical rescue of Rochester



in the first instance foreshadows her spiritual rescue of him after the fire when he has hidden himself, in despair, at Ferndean.

As Eric Solomon has pointed out, however, Jane is involved in the fire of passion herself. Just before Jane leaves Rochester, at the height of his attempt to persuade her to become his mistress, he "seemed to devour [her] with his flaming glance" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 103), she felt as "powerless as stubble exposed to the draught and glow of a furnace" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 103), and Rochester claims that their passion "fuses" them together "in pure, powerful flame" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 100). Solomon points out that Jane desires "life, fire, feeling" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 138), that "flame flickers in [her] eye" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 259), and that Rochester notes soon after meeting her that no one has yet struck the "fire from [her] that is within [her]" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 254). The other significant point that Solomon has to make is that Jane's symbolic action in dousing the fire set by Bertha Mason is continued in water imagery associated with her.<sup>10</sup> Jane's "eye shines like dew" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 259); after fleeing the fire of Rochester's desire, she presses her "face to the wet turf" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 108), and her eyes "shed such stormy, scalding, heart-wrung tears" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 109). Solomon points out that after avoiding the "ice kisses" of St. John, Jane returns to Rochester, whose "quenched" lamp is "waiting to be relit" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 266). Solomon closes with a pertinent association between imagery and narrative structure: The fire-water image underscores the basic idea of *Jane Eyre*: just as love must find a middle way between the flames of passion and the waters of pure reason, so Jane must find a golden mean between egocentric rage and Christ-like submission, between Aunt Reed and Helen Burns, between the wild, Byronic Rochester and the tempered, controlled Rivers.<sup>11</sup>

The emotional conflict which is central to *Jane Eyre* is consistently







reflected in the imagery of its description.

The one symbolic element of nature which appears in both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* is the moon. Although its importance varies from appearance to appearance, the moon comes to be associated by the reader with virtually all of the significant events of Jane's life, and many of Lucy's. Just exactly what Brontë intended is hard to specify, but certain characteristic effects can be pointed out. Brontë seems determined to give the moon a kind of independent existence. Jane talks of it as "glancing through bars of cloud" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 3), "ascending in solemn march" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 148); she says, on different occasions, that it "looked in at [her]" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 266), and that it "threw on [her] one bewildered, dreary glance" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 280). Lucy imagines the moon "glassing . . . her pearly front" in a pool of water (*Villette*, II, 261) and talks of "her reign" and "her smile."

In addition to these hints at personification, there is a sympathy between the moon and the two protagonists which extends beyond the reflection in nature of particular emotional states.<sup>12</sup> Heilman suggests that although Brontë never fully defines for herself what the moon signifies, it is used in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* as a symbol for "feeling-imagination-intuition" as opposed to "reason-judgement-common sense."<sup>13</sup> He points out that the moon is often associated with revelation to the protagonist, but it is revelation always strongly associated with emotion, imagination, or something which borders on intuition. The moon appears during important moments in the emotional lives of the protagonists: Jane meets Rochester under the moon (*Jane Eyre*, I, 141), he proposes to her under the moon (*Jane Eyre*, II, 12), and the climactic struggle with St. John takes place under



the moon (*Jane Eyre*, II, 239). In *Villette*, where the moon is much less evident than in *Jane Eyre*, Lucy talks to Dr. Bretton under moonlight (*Villette*, I, 229), the moon appears in order to open and close the park scene (*Villette*, II, 255), and floats above the only love scene between Paul and Lucy (*Villette*, II, 303).

Sometimes the moon is only the subtle reflector of emotion as when the miserable young Jane picks a "cold and ghastly" moon out of *Bewick's Book of British Birds* (*Jane Eyre*, I, 3), or when Lucy, convinced after seeing M. Paul at the evening fête, that she has been cheated of love once again, sees in the moon a symbol of inexorable fate:

the beauty of the moonlight -- forgotten in the park -- here once more flowed in upon perception. High she rode, and calm and stainlessly she shone. . . . The rival lamps were dying: she held her course like a white fate. . . . She and those stars seemed to me at once the types and witnesses of truth all regnant. The night-sky lit her reign: like its slow-wheeling progress, advanced her victory -- that onward movement which has been, and is, and will be from eternity to eternity. (*Villette*, II, 280)

The moon reflects her calm acceptance of what she feels is desertion by M. Paul. Although she was wrong and admits that she was wrong, the moon seems to her to symbolize the indifferent fate to which she regards herself subject. Later, having been convinced of M. Paul's fidelity, the one and only uncompromised love scene takes place first under "a moon so lovely and so halcyon the heart trembled under her smile" (*Villette*, II, 303), and then under "such moonlight as fell on Eden" (*Villette*, II, 308).

It is when the moon symbolizes emotion that is almost intuitive that it is most effective. It is in these instances that the moon seems most to have life of its own, to suggest a relationship between the protagonist and itself which borders on the supernatural. This empathy suggests a non-rational sixth sense in both protagonists but especially in Jane, a





possibility in Jane which is confirmed by her prophetic dreams and the telepathic cry from Rochester. Just before their first meeting, she is watching a frozen landscape above which "sat the rising moon; pale yet as a cloud" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 14).<sup>14</sup> After the excitement of meeting Rochester and just before returning to what she believes to be the "stagnation" of Thornfield, the rising moon and her attendant stars provoke a strange excitement:

both my eyes and spirit seemed drawn from the gloomy house . . . to that sky expanded before me -- a blue sea absolved from taint of cloud; the moon ascending it in solemn march; her orb seeming to look up as she left the hill tops . . . far and farther below, and aspired to the zenith, midnight-dark in its fathomless depth and measureless distance: and for those trembling stars that followed her course, they made my heart tremble, my veins glow when I viewed them. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 148)

This description is not just the result of Jane's encounter with Rochester; her excited interest in the rising moon suggests the fulfilment of her aspiration which is to commence in her relationship with Rochester. Later it is a moon "silver-white and crystal clear" but "too solemn" which awakens Jane seconds before Bertha attacks Richard Mason. In *Villette* only one instance seems to suggest the prophetic feeling and that is at the beginning of the dream-like visit to the carnival in the park (Chapters XXXVIII and XXXIX). It opens with a "moon supreme, in an element deep and splendid" (*Villette*, II, 255). The moon lures Lucy forth into "dew, coolness and glory" setting the scene for the revelatory experience to follow.

There remains one more premonitory symbol to consider in *Jane Eyre*, and that is the "giant horse-chestnut" tree at the bottom of the orchard at Thornfield Hall.<sup>15</sup> It is under this tree that Rochester finally proposes to Jane (*Jane Eyre*, II, 22), and half of it split away. The blackened



ruin foreshadows the double disaster which lies before Jane and Rochester: the shattered marriage and the destruction of Thornfield. Also, as she will find that their love survived both disasters, so Jane sees that the ruined chestnut still clings to life, "the firm base and strong roots kept [the halves] unsundered" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 47). To complete the symbolic structure, at the end of the novel Rochester specifically associates himself with the ruined chestnut tree:

"I am no better than the old lightning-struck chestnut-tree in Thornfield orchard."

"And what right would that ruin have to bid a budding woodbine cover its decay with freshness." (*Jane Eyre*, II, 273)

Like the woodbine, Jane brings renewed life to a despairing and disfigured Rochester. Thus with Jane and Rochester both changed by their experiences the new relationship between them is linked by this image to the symbolic disaster which separated them.

All the central symbols of *Jane Eyre* which are associated with Rochester and Jane are brought together by Brontë amidst the storm preceding the marriage day (*Jane Eyre*, II, 47). Before running out on the road to meet the returning Rochester, Jane pauses before the chestnut tree now "black and riven" into two halves:

As I looked up at them, the moon appeared momentarily in that part of the sky which filled their fissure; her disk was blood-red and half overcast; she seemed to throw on me one bewildered, dreary glance, and buried herself again instantly in the deep drift of cloud. (*Jane Eyre*, II, 48)

The moon which is pre-eminently Jane's symbol is "blood-red," the colour of passion and of fire. If the moon represents Jane's spirit, then it is "bewildered" by Rochester's passion, and it appears in the fissure of the blackened chestnut tree, suggesting the passion which paradoxically joins and separates them. Thus, Jane's entire situation is summed up by the







confluence of the major symbolic patterns of her relationship with Rochester.

Faced with the problem of achieving implicit characterization or, conversely, with the difficulty of having the protagonist-narrators characterize themselves explicitly, Brontë obviously found in extended metaphors, image patterns and symbols, part of the solution. The image patterns of fire, water and torture are directly related to the emotions of the respective protagonists and, in *Jane Eyre*, occasionally merge into the symbolic structure of the novel. The extended metaphors and personifications, which are the most striking examples of figurative language, are applied almost exclusively to the extreme mental conflict which is so important a part of the lives of Jane and Lucy. Because the reader is forced to take his attention away from the normal stream of events in the novel and concentrate upon these dramatizations of emotion, the impact of mental conflict is much greater. That these metaphorical devices are used much more frequently in *Villette* is a good indication that Brontë understood their force. They reflect Lucy's inability to control her emotions and lend to the impression of her mind that hysterical quality which is so important a part of her character.

Symbols, both those within the sphere of the protagonist-narrator and those which must be regarded as independent, are definitely used for the purpose of characterization, especially in *Jane Eyre* where the pattern of symbols is striking. Nature is used by both protagonist-narrators to convey, symbolically, the state of their minds but in *Jane Eyre* it is also employed, independently of the protagonists, to confirm emotional responses. Dreams, paintings, symbolic figures, as well as some of the protagonists'



responses to natural phenomena, are used to suggest depths of emotion which are not explicitly recognized by either the protagonists or the more knowing narrators.

One other concluding point can be made as a result of this analysis to distinguish between the general impact of character in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. I suggested earlier that there is a conflict between the narrator's emphasis upon Jane's character and personality revealed through her introspections and relationships with others, and the Gothic plot of *Jane Eyre* which tends to obscure this emphasis. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane's romantic bent is matched by a novelistic world in which a Bertha Mason can actually exist and act in the way she does, in which a powerful and eccentric hero can marry a poor and plain governess, and in which the supernatural has objective existence through a telepathic cry, and through premonitions and prophetic signs which come true.

In *Villette* Brontë seems to be much more concerned to avoid the more obvious Gothic elements of the plot. The only supernatural element, the nun, proves to be a hoax, and dreams are turned more directly to the revelation of character. There is evidence in the analysis of this chapter to suggest that Brontë carried this trend away from romance, into the detail of the novel. Nature is far less likely to echo Lucy's mind than Jane's; only in one or two instances does it seem to reflect her mood. In *Jane Eyre*, nature responds directly to Jane's emotional or spiritual state. The moon, particularly, with its mysterious sensitivity to the protagonist's emotional state, makes far more frequent appearances in *Jane Eyre* than *Villette*. The final result of the contrast between Lucy's mood and the outside world as opposed to the correspondence in Jane's case is that the





subjective intensity of Lucy's mind is much more clearly impressed upon the reader.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### POINT OF VIEW AND CONTROL OF SUBJECTIVITY

The narrative form chosen by Charlotte Brontë for *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* is that of the autobiography. This choice implies that the novel is being written as the experiences of the narrator, considered and selected by her for the benefit of the reader. Because characters, like people, are rarely static, they change over time. The result in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* is the existence in the same novel of two versions of the same character: the older, more mature woman or *narrator*, who has paused at a point in time (ten years after the closing events for Jane, three years after for Lucy) to write the history of her life; and the changing person she has been, who will be referred to as the *protagonist*. Taking this narrative framework as a basic premise, the purpose of this chapter will be to elucidate Brontë's artistic practice with regard to the temporal and physical relationships, and the moral or emotional relationships, among reader, narrator and protagonist.

In the two novels under consideration, there are five basic kinds of information or data available to the reader:<sup>1</sup> scenic material comprising specification, setting and dialogue; the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist; commentary upon characters other than the protagonist, often including explicit characterization and analysis of motives; summary of action taking place over an extended period of time, and, sometimes, of characteristics of secondary characters collected over time; and commentary upon the protagonist's actions, thoughts and feelings. I have noted





these categories of information according to how they affect the reader's temporal and physical distance from the facts they convey. The autobiographical framework would seem to postulate a narrative situation in which the narrator is always firmly planted between the reader and the life being recreated; that is, that the reader would always feel that he was looking back, with the narrator, upon past time. In fact, depending upon which of the above categories of data he is being faced with at any given moment, the reader may feel he is present with either the narrator or the protagonist.<sup>2</sup>

Scenic information includes specific action, setting and dialogue fully presented in time. The result is dramatic immediacy: the events seem to be happening before the reader without the intervention of the narrator. The reader may be aware, however, that he is seeing through the eyes of the protagonist although this will depend upon the kind of scene. For instance, when Jane is arguing with Rochester just prior to the marriage, the reader is faced almost entirely with dialogue for several pages:

"Ask me something now, Janet -- the least thing: I desire to be entreated ---."

"Indeed, I will, sir; I have my petition all ready."

"Speak! But if you look up and smile with that countenance, I shall swear concession before I know to what, and that will make a fool of me."

"Not at all, sir; I ask only this: don't send for the jewels, and don't crown me with roses: you might as well put a border of gold lace round that plain pocket handkerchief you have there." (*Jane Eyre*, II, 28)

The reader loses his awareness of the protagonist as the focal point from which he is supposed to be experiencing the dialogue, and he certainly has no sense of the existence of a narrator. The result in this case is complete dramatic immediacy: the reader is not even aware that he is seeing or hearing the conversation through Jane's senses. The pure scene, then, has a kind of independent existence. On other occasions Brontë makes certain that the



reader understands that the scenic information is being given as if impinging upon the physical senses of the protagonist at the time.

Consider Lucy's reaction when she wakes up at La Terrasse:

I felt sure now that I was in the pensionnat . . . sure by the chill, the whiteness, the solitude, amidst which I lay. I say *whiteness* -- for the dimity curtains, dropped before a French bed, bounded my view. . . . My eye . . . blinked baffled, on encountering the limited area of a small cabinet -- a cabinet with sea-green walls. (*Villette*, I, 211)

There is certainly no evidence of the narrator; she has effaced herself. The reader, however, is made abundantly aware that he is seeing what the protagonist, from her position in the bed, can see. His view is circumscribed by her physical senses. All scenic material, except dialogue and the simplest facts about the action, is identified with the protagonist. Since the narrator rarely intrudes, however, the reader remains as close to the action as the protagonist.<sup>3</sup>

The particular thoughts and feelings of the protagonist also produce the quality of immediacy for the reader in that they are usually fully presented in time and usually happen in reaction to specific events. They may be presented as a kind of quoted interior monologue as when Jane is watching Rochester during the Blanche Ingram episode:

"He is not to them what he is to me," I thought: "he is not of their kind. I believe he is of mine; -- I am sure he is, -- I feel akin to him, -- I understand the language of his countenance and movements." (*Jane Eyre*, I, 225)

Or the thoughts may be described, ostensibly by the narrator, as in the following thoughts of Jane about Blanche:

when she failed, I saw how she might have succeeded. Arrows that continually glanced off from Mr. Rochester's breast and fell harmless at his feet, might, I knew, if shot by a surer hand, have quivered keen in his proud heart. (*Jane Eyre*, I, 241)

Either way the reader receives the thoughts with almost the same sense of







directness as he does dialogue.

The part of scenic material which is description and action, rather than dialogue, is usually presented in the past tense: "I *felt* sure now that I *was* in the pensionnat." The result is not a real awareness on the reader's part of time past but, as I have pointed out, a feeling of being present with the protagonist. At certain points in both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, however, Brontë removes even this minimal barrier to immediacy and puts some of her narrative into the present tense.<sup>4</sup> These instances are parts of scenes seen through the eyes of the protagonist and accompanied by her thoughts seemingly as they occur in reaction to what is passing before the protagonist and the reader. In the following passage from *Jane Eyre*, Jane has just stepped into the orchard to avoid meeting Rochester:

While such honey-dew fell, such silence reigned, such gloaming gathered, I *felt* as if I could haunt such shade forever: but in threading the flower and fruit-parterres . . . my step *is* stayed. . . . Sweet-briar and southernwood, jasmine, pink, and rose have long been yielding their evening sacrifice of incense: this new scent *is* neither of shrub nor flower; it *is* -- I know it well -- it *is* Mr. Rochester's cigar. I look round and I *listen*. I *see* trees laden with ripening fruit. I *hear* a nightingale warbling in a wood half a mile off; no moving form *is* visible, no coming step audible; but that perfume increases: I *must flee*. (*Jane Eyre*, II, 11)<sup>5</sup>

This emotionally suggestive scene is given particularly effective presentation by the shift from past to present tense. Jane's delicate response to the beauty and fertility of the orchard reflects a readiness for Rochester's love; at the same time, her innate tendency to self-denial provokes her to avoid his company. Because Rochester will propose to Jane shortly after, in one of the climactic moments of the book, Brontë wants to give to Jane's emotional attitude a clarity which will set it off from the usual narration. This is achieved by the shift in tense from past to present. Brontë<sup>6</sup> uses



the technique for similar effect on several other occasions in *Jane Eyre* including when Jane is watching Rochester and Blanche together (*Jane Eyre*, I, 223) and when she is wandering on the moors after fleeing Rochester (*Jane Eyre*, II, 110). In all these, the device is used when Brontë wants to focus upon a particularly significant cause and effect relationship between the scene, which is impinging upon the protagonist's mind and the thoughts and feelings which that scene provokes in the protagonist. The effect is to heighten the suspense of the moment, to lend a kind of tension to important moments. Thus in *Villette*, at the beginning of the park scene between the vision of the moon which a drugged Lucy sees from a window, and her descent into the street outside, Brontë shifts into the present tense to give a direct impression of Lucy's hypersensitive perceptions:

The oak staircase creaks somewhat as I descend, but not much: -- I am in the carré . . . the entrance to the corridor stands open. The classes seem to my thought, great dreary jails, buried far back beyond thoroughfares, and for me, filled with spectral and intolerable memories, laid miserable amongst their straw and their manacles . . . Hush! -- the clock strikes. Ghostly deep . . . is the stillness . . . While my ear follows to silence the hum of the last stroke, I catch faintly from the built-out capital, a sound like bells or like a band. (*Villette*, II, 257)

As before, this small scene is prefatory to a long episode which is to be extremely important in an emotional sense to the protagonist. Having emphasized the protagonist's particular attitude for the benefit of the reader, Brontë reverts to the past tense for the rest of the park scene. The present tense, of course, does not permit comment or summary by the retrospective narrator, both of which Brontë usually finds necessary to the presentation of a major scene. Also the present tense is fairly obtrusive because of the contrast with the normal narrative tense. As a consequence







the method is only rarely used and then usually to prepare the reader for what follows by drawing his attention to the protagonist's state of mind.

A much more complex situation occurs in a large body of information dealing with secondary characters. One might think that the obvious choice to portray other characters would be the narrator and that her maturity and over-all view would lend authority to any such characterization. While this sometimes happens, as with the characterization in *Villette* of Madame Beck, (Chapter VIII), the usual character analysis is hard to assign to either narrator or protagonist alone. For instance, this character study of Dr. Bretton seems to be presented by the narrator:

He was not made of common clay . . . while the outlines of his nature had been shaped with breadth and vigor, the details embraced workmanship of almost feminine delicacy: finer, much finer, than you could be prepared to meet with. (*Villette*, I, 239)

We are told, in addition, that if his feelings are sensitive, he lacks sensitivity to the feelings of others. This opinion accords well with the reader's understanding of Dr. Bretton's character as it appears in later episodes, for instance, his callous treatment of Lucy over his first letter to her (*Villette*, Chapter II). This considered judgement, however, is definitely attributable to the protagonist because it ends with her comment, "This night . . . I saw well and at one glance his whole mechanism."

During the Blanche Ingram episode, in *Jane Eyre*, the narrator feels constrained to point out to the "reader" that at that time she had already fallen in love with Mr. Rochester and that it was not pleasant to watch him court Blanche. She goes on to say:

There was nothing to cool or banish love in these circumstances; though much to create despair. Much too, you will think, reader, to engender jealousy: if a woman, in my position, could presume to be jealous of a woman in Miss Ingram's. But I was not jealous . . . Miss Ingram was a mark beneath jealousy.



(*Jane Eyre*, I, 239)

The speaker, in this case, we must presume to be the narrator-writer from her distant perspective, because of the direct address to the reader. The impact of the above passage and of the character dissection which follows is that of a judgement from the narrator. Brontë, however, does not seem to be concerned about the distinction between narrator and protagonist. She has Jane close the passage on Blanche with the remark: "Other eyes besides mine watched these manifestations of character . . . Yes: the future bridegroom, Mr. Rochester himself, exercised over his intended a ceaseless surveillance" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 240). Suddenly the reader is brought back to the protagonist's present. What started off to be commentary by the narrator from her temporally distant point of view is made into the view of the protagonist; what commenced as a direct address to the reader by the narrator becomes the immediate perception of the protagonist at the time of happening. The particular example is an excellent illustration of the confusion of distance between narrator and protagonist.

Whether it is of action taking place over a long period of time or of the knowledge of a character accumulated over a long period of time, summary must be assigned to the narrator. The condensation involved can only come from the person within the novel who is beyond the temporal present of the action, that is, the narrator.<sup>6</sup> In this capacity, Lucy describes the end of the term at the Pensionnat Beck:

Following Madame Beck's fête, with its three preceding weeks of relaxation . . . came a period of reaction; two months of real application, of close, hard study. . . . Candidates for rewards had then to work in good earnest; masters and teachers had to set their shoulders to the wheel, to urge on the backward, and diligently aid and train the more promising. (*Villette*,







I, 192)

The result for the reader is a different point of view from the scenic material, the thoughts of the protagonist, or even from the area of confused distance discussed above. The reader feels distant in time and space, from what is being summarized, closer in these respects to the narrator who is doing the summarizing.

Even more closely associated with the retrospective narrator is the explicit summary of, and commentary about, the protagonist's actions, thoughts and feelings. The reader accepts summary because of the factual information it provides; the source of commentary upon the protagonist is important because such commentary directly affects the reader's attitude toward the protagonist. Thus it is obviously the retrospective narrator who provides this comment upon the protagonist's visit to the confessional:

Did I, do you suppose, reader, contemplate venturing again within that worthy priest's reach? As soon should I have thought of walking into a Babylonish furnace. That priest had arms which could influence me; he was naturally kind, with a sentimental French kindness, to whose softness I knew myself not wholly impervious. Without respecting some sorts of affection, there was hardly any sort, having a fibre of root in reality, which I could rely on my force wholly to withstand. (*Villette*, I, 205)

In part a description of the protagonist's reaction, this passage also adds what is clearly the more mature opinion of the narrator. As a result, the reader's physical and temporal point of view shifts, momentarily, to coincide with that of the narrator.

Since the bulk of both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* fits into the first three categories mentioned -- scene, protagonist's introspections, or characterization of secondary characters -- and since in all three of these categories the reader feels that he is present in time and space



with the protagonist, the impact of the narrator is much less noticeable than the autobiographical premise would suggest. The reader is not faced with a pervasive character, the narrator, who mediates all the information. In fact the narrators of *Villette* and *Jane Eyre* only appear intermittently, and most of the time the reader is right behind the protagonist as she experiences and reacts to the events in which she is involved.

So far the analysis of the narrative material has been concerned with point of view, the temporal-physical relationship between the reader and the narrator or the protagonist. A related question of at least as much importance to the particular impact of the protagonist upon the reader is the possibility of moral or emotional distance between the reader and the narrator or the protagonist, or both. Since both novels deal with personalities and emotional development the kind of distance which occurs is emotional, and the question of how Brontë controls this distance resolves itself into how the reader distinguishes between subjective and reliable information. Distance is achieved by making the reader more aware than the protagonist or even the narrator, of the significance of other characters, or, more likely, of the protagonist's emotional reactions. When the reader's perception of events and characters and his emotional reactions to them differ from the understanding of the protagonist or from the apparent awareness of the narrator, then the reader is placed in a superior position to them.

First let me state, that I found no evidence to suggest that the narrators of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* are anything other than reliable; that is, within the limits of their characters, they seem to represent the author's point of view.<sup>7</sup> This does not solve, however, the question of subjective





narration. That the narrators are reliable only means that the reader can rely on any information he receives that comes obviously and exclusively from the narrators with their temporally distant and morally mature perspective. The practical result is that he can rely on the narrators' commentary and summary of events and characters. The reader may often feel that he is aware of depths and kinds of emotions or of facts outside the protagonist which both narrator and protagonist fail to register; in fact, because Brontë is interested in having the reader discover the protagonist for himself as she lives her life, the narrator only appears occasionally to give the reader aid. Consequently all one can assume is that, except on rare occasions, the narrator refrains from confirming or denying the reader's suspicions.

Pure scene -- dialogue and simple description of action -- because of its apparent lack of any influence either of protagonist or narrator, seems to be the most objective information available to the reader. As I have pointed out, in pure scene there is little or no overt evidence of the presence of either narrator or protagonist. Even in the following example, however, it seems to me that in the moment of speaking M. Paul's independence from Lucy the narrator is established. The protagonist Lucy comes upon M. Paul rummaging through her desk:

I think he heard me breathe. He turned suddenly: his temperament was nervous, yet he never started, and seldom changed colour; there was something hardy about him.

"I thought you were gone into town with the other teachers," said he, taking a grim gripe of his self-possession, which half escaped him -- "It is well you are not. Do you think I care for being caught? Not I. I often visit your desk."

"Monsieur, I know it." (*Villette*, II, 118)

For a moment M. Paul and Lucy are equal as characters. The reader accepts



what M. Paul has to say as though it came directly from himself rather than through the mind of Lucy. Regardless of the fact that all the material is "written" by the narrator, and she may be supposed to have a perfect memory, the reader accepts pure scene at face value. Pure scene and that narrative material which constitutes the narrator's commentary and summary, then, contribute what is obviously reliable in the novels.

The information about other characters is vital but cannot automatically be assigned reliability because it seems to be, as we have seen, as much a product of the protagonist's perceptions, as the narrator's. Brontë, however, gives these opinions about, and analyses of, other characters the force of authority by continually confirming them by the use of scene; the central characters are never proved wrong in their pronouncements, never belied by actions or words. When the central character makes a positive statement about other characters her analysis is inevitably borne out by the words and actions of that character. This is not to say that everything is always revealed about another character all at once. The reader often has to wait until the protagonist makes discoveries, as Lucy does, for instance, about M. Paul, gradually discerning his better qualities. As also happens in Lucy's relationship with M. Paul, the protagonist's feeling for the other character may be strongly influenced by what she does or does not know at any given point in time. The most objective information, then, is used to confirm a necessary but more dubious source. There is one notable exception to this otherwise automatic confirmation, and that is in Lucy's estimate of Dr. Bretton when she is most infatuated with him. But the diversion from the truth is half recog-







nized by the protagonist and carefully pointed out by the narrator. An ancillary means of lending authority to the protagonist's pronouncements about the other characters is the essential integrity of motive evident in both Jane and Lucy. Although not always conscious of their real motives or the real state of affairs, they both display a rigorous honesty, and the reader is aware that they attempt to be objective.

The kind of scenic material which is obviously directed to the reader *through the senses* of the protagonist is harder to assess in terms of reliability. As with the analysis of the characters, the reader comes to accept on faith what is received in this way. No evidence is given to contradict this basic, factual information. The protagonist, however, will often impose her subjective impression of those facts as Lucy does with the dormitory beds at one point during the harrowing long vacation. To her it seemed as though "the ghastly white beds were turning into spectres" (*Villette*, I, 201). Here, however, the difference between reality and subjectivity is clearly seen. The beds are still beds, and they exist in a dormitory in which Lucy is trying to sleep.

The thoughts and feelings of the protagonists as they react to people and events constitute one of the most pervasive and important bodies of information in the two novels. This kind of material is the one category of information which is immediately and exclusively related to the two protagonists. It is at the same time the least reliable and most interesting material in the books. In fact, it is the central focus of both novels and everything else is subordinate to it. Here is the one area in which the reader is unsure of what he is told, where he has to grasp at all the evidence and discern for himself the nature and complexity of the



two characters placed before him. Obviously, the author aids the reader, but Brontë rarely *tells* the reader anything about the protagonists. She uses the reliable information outlined above only rarely to state, and often to suggest, a discrepancy between a particular subjective reaction and the truth.

The kind of language used is one means of suggesting untold depths of feeling or peculiarity of character which is built into the perceptions and thoughts of the protagonists. As we have seen in Chapter Three of this thesis, imagery and metaphor may suggest much about the protagonist which she does not recognize herself, or they may merely reflect what has been implied elsewhere. It may be objected that according to the logic of the autobiographical form, all such figurative language is selected by the narrator and may be a more accurate reflection of the state of her mind but, by the same reasoning, the narrator is trying to recreate her own life, and in so doing selects the kind of figurative language which reflects the particular state of mind of her younger self.

Subjectivity in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* appears in three forms: a momentary mental or emotional aberration which is quickly discerned and noted by the protagonist herself; subjective reactions of the protagonist, the correct attitude being pointed out by the emotionally calm narrator; and subjective reactions of the protagonist about which the narrator with her complete knowledge could elucidate but does not. In both books most of the narrative material we have seen is reduced to the perceptions of the protagonist, and the question of subjectivity boils down first to the fact that her perceptions particularly about herself are not always either reliable or complete.





By way of illustration and comparison of the above forms of subjectivity I would like to consider some of the main areas of subjectivity in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. In both novels the reader's attitude toward the protagonist is very carefully controlled. In neither case does Brontë expect the reader to accept in the same light as the protagonist does, the situations which occur, nor need the reader be content with the protagonist's awareness. The reader is to learn much about the fundamental character of young Jane in *Jane Eyre*, but what his attitude toward her particular reactions and feelings should be is carefully defined by the mature narrator. Without the older Jane Eyre's comments, which intrude continually upon the Gateshead chapters, it would be hard to distinguish how many of the younger Jane's reactions are due to her character and how many to the treatment she receives. In the midst of Jane's fury at her treatment before being incarcerated in the red room, the narrator calmly admits that much of the trouble which she got into at the Gateshead was due to her difficult nature: "I was a discord in Gateshead; I was like nobody there"; had she been otherwise "Mrs. Reed would have enjoyed [her] presence more complacently" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 13). The light which young Jane takes to be a ghost, the narrator "can now conjecture . . . was . . . a gleam from a lantern" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 15).

About the protagonist's reactions to the descriptions of the Arctic in the book on birds the narrator comments, "I formed an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children's brains" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 3); her remarks help to distinguish fact from Jane's fancy and thereby help to define more clearly Jane's morbid imagination. At the same time Brontë wants to ensure the reader's sympathy



for the young Jane. Consequently, if Mrs. Reed can be excused to a degree for her treatment of Jane, the narrator carefully gives credence to Jane's complaint to Mr. Lloyd the apothecary: "Fearful . . . of losing this first and only opportunity of relieving my grief by imparting it, I, after a disturbed pause contrived to frame a meagre, though as far as it went, true response" (*Jane Eyre*, I, 24). The "meagre though true response" is the narrator's blessing upon Jane's hesitant voicing of her misery.

An entirely different method of adding to the reader's awareness of character is employed in the opening chapters of *Villette*. Unlike the pervasive presence of the narrator above, the narrator of *Villette* is rarely discernible during this part of the novel. The protagonist, herself, steps back, and the action of the novel revolves around tiny Paulina Home and her childish romance with Graham Bretton. The protagonist, however, still remains vitally important even here where she seems to have been replaced. It is her attitude which is significant. Faced with an extremely sensitive, intensely emotional, and almost comically serious child in Paulina, the protagonist Lucy is intrigued but mildly disdainful. She compares Paulina's "sudden dangerous" nature with her own "cooler temperament" and finds Paulina's suppression of strong feelings "burdensome." The little girl's pathetic devotion to her father provokes the protagonist's rather cold reaction: "This, I perceived, was a one-idea'd nature; betraying that monomaniac tendency I have ever thought the most unfortunate with which man or woman can be cursed" (*Villette*, I, 10). The scenes between Paulina and Graham are, for the reader, amongst the most delightful in either of the two novels being analysed, but the protagonist remains





strangely aloof and unamused. The contrast between the reader's perception of Paulina and Lucy's lack of humor and persistent coolness suggest that Lucy herself has something to fear which she senses in Paulina's personality. That fear comes close to consciousness in Lucy when she wonders how Paulina will bear "the humiliation and desolations which books and my own reason tell me are prepared for all flesh" (*Villette*, I, 37). Lucy's consciousness of Paulina's emotions suggests the same depth of feeling in herself, but only suggests it since Lucy keeps her emotions fully under control throughout.

One of the most vital areas in which the protagonist's awareness and that of the reader differ has to do with the love relationship between Jane and Rochester, and between Lucy and Paul Emmanuel. In both cases the two protagonists ignore the evidence of their lovers' interest and pursue their own self-denying views of the situation. Rochester's barely concealed passion after Jane rescues him from the fire (*Jane Eyre*, I, 194), his revelation, while disguised as a gypsy, that throughout the Blanche Ingram episode he has been sensitively aware of Jane and her feelings (*Jane Eyre*, I, 258), and finally the irony of his remarks to Jane before finally proposing to her (*Jane Eyre*, II, 15) all build up in the reader an awareness of Rochester's real intentions as opposed to Jane's determination that she will have nothing to do with false hopes. The reader can watch, with a degree of detachment, the strain this despair of fulfilment places upon Jane's emotions. The reader's awareness of the truth and the protagonist's lack of awareness underline the element of self-denial which appears strongly in Jane elsewhere in the novel.

The love relationships are central in both novels, and during their



development much is revealed to the reader about each of the protagonists. Consequently Brontë presents those relationships and what they reveal about the principals in a leisurely fashion, bit by bit. The narrator, who is aware of the whole process and its conclusion, is rarely to be seen. The steadily growing mutual interest between Paul Emmanuel and Lucy is presented to the reader as the protagonist Lucy gradually becomes more and more aware of Paul's existence. The first view of M. Paul is not inspiring (*Villette*, I, 79): asked for an opinion about Lucy, he equivocates and finally suggests to Mme. Beck that she hire Lucy because she, Mme. Beck, cannot lose anything by it. The protagonist notes only that "the judgement, when it at last came was as indefinite as what had gone before it" (*Villette*, I, 80). The little professor gives way before Lucy's interest in Dr. Bretton although he reappears from time to time all the way through that relationship. During the rehearsal for Mme. Beck's fête-day, the protagonist comments, largely upon M. Paul's less likeable qualities:

A dark little man he certainly was; pungent and austere. Even to me he seemed a harsh apparition, with his close-shorn, black head, his broad, sallow brow, his thin cheek, his wide and quivering nostril, his thorough glance and hurried bearing. Irritable he was . . . . (*Villette*, I, 160)

Much against Lucy's will she finds herself forced into the play for the fête-day but is surprised at the gentleness M. Paul displays after it is all over.

As her infatuation with Dr. Bretton takes hold, Lucy's relationship with M. Paul also develops. In love with Dr. Bretton, she completely misinterprets the professor's interest in her as an incurable capacity for minding everyone's business but his own. She cannot understand why she is







singled out for his attention and is annoyed at his interference. On several occasions the little man is rude and overbearing: at the musical concert with Dr. Bretton she tries to ignore him and is nearly knocked over; when she gets a letter from Dr. Bretton, M. Paul intrudes on her privacy and is strongly infuriated (*Villette*, I, 304); after giving an important speech at a public gathering (*Villette*, II, 77) he particularly asks her opinion and after, at a party, annoys her intensely by criticizing her behaviour, again while she is with Dr. Bretton (*Villette*, II, 85). There is much more evidence, but a pattern of behaviour emerges, at least in the early part of the relationship. Lucy has no idea why M. Paul takes it upon himself to dog her footsteps and to correct her behaviour. The thought that it could be jealousy never occurs to her, but it becomes obvious to the reader after a while that M. Paul is motivated by more than disinterested benevolence.

The other side of these encounters with M. Paul is Lucy's increasing awareness of his admirable qualities. Even here, the protagonist is, as I have suggested, infallible in her characterization. M. Paul is disagreeable and irritable, overbearing and inquisitive; but he is also intelligent, forceful, deeply emotional, gentle, honest and endowed with a kind of naivety or innocence. These characteristics, however, emerge slowly both for the protagonist and the reader, despite the fact that at the time of writing the narrator is, of course, deeply in love with him. As with Rochester, although much more thoroughly, the characterization of M. Paul takes place over time and as the protagonist herself discovers him. Again, as with the Rochester-Jane relationship, the reader is aware of M. Paul's love for Lucy *before* she will admit it herself. Also as with Jane and



Rochester, Lucy finds it harder than the reader does to believe that M. Paul really does love her.

There is a fairly significant difference between *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* with regard to the relationship between the narrator and her earlier self. Lucy Snowe is a much less stable individual than Jane Eyre, and the instability shows up in the number of times the narrator feels constrained to point out her own unreasonable behaviour. The emotional distance between Jane the protagonist and Jane the narrator is most clearly marked in childhood. Thereafter, only on two notable occasions does the narrator distinctly separate herself from the protagonist and on the first of these, the occasion of Jane's departure from Thornfield, she merely withdraws to a distance to comment on the conflict between conscience and love. Brontë uses the quality of Jane's rejection of Thornfield to suggest that her rejection of Rochester is partially the result of the tendency to martyrdom in her character. This morbid quality hovers in the background, suggested, rather than stated, during the Thornfield section of the novel, and is only at the forefront on the two occasions in which the protagonist and the narrator are furthest apart: the Gateshead chapters and the closing pages of Jane's relationship with St. John.

The protagonist, Jane, seems to be perfectly aware of how much she would sacrifice in submitting to St. John. She says, "I did not love my servitude" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 211), that to please him "I must disown half my nature, stifle half my faculties" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 211), and "If I join St. John, I abandon half myself" (*Jane Eyre*, II, 219). She almost succumbs,





however, and at that point the narrator comments:

I was almost as hard beset by him now as I had been before, in a different way, by another. I was a fool both times. To have yielded then would have been an error of principle; to have yielded now would have been an error of judgement. So I think at this hour, when I look back to the crises through the quiet medium of time: I was unconscious of folly at the instant. (*Jane Eyre*, II, 238)

This statement is a clear example of Brontë's use of the narrator to clarify the protagonist's behaviour. From the narrator's point of view, the situation is clearly wrong and the protagonist's subjective reaction, unfortunate.

In accordance with her emotionally unstable character, there are several particular occasions in *Villette* in which the mature Lucy Snowe "distances" herself from the protagonist in order to point out that her attitude or stated mind was unreasonable. She comments at the beginning of the long vacation upon the protagonist's deep depression, stating that it was misguided but not unreasonable under the circumstances (*Villette*, I, 197). Later when she is in hysterics over the loss of Dr. John's letter, the distance between protagonist and narrator appears again in the description of the protagonist as "the grovelling, groping, monomaniac" (*Villette*, I, 312).

Most interesting in *Villette*, however, is the larger pattern of Lucy's behaviour which the narrator does not seem to recognize. While either the narrator or the protagonist are often aware of particular subjective reactions, what makes the greatest impact upon the reader is the up and down movement of Lucy's emotions. After the cool disdain of the early Bretton days Lucy turns in upon herself even more while caring for Miss Marchmont. Forced out of her shell, however, by Miss Marchmont's death, Lucy embarks upon a strangely exhilarating journey to Villette which contrasts sharply with her fear of the world, which, the narrator points out, was her attitude at Miss Marchmont's. Even the protagonist recognizes during her trip that she is becoming euphoric. The same uncharacteristic exhilaration



takes hold of her as a result of the memory of a storm which had excited her and, later, during the play for Mme. Beck's fête. Each time, there is some awareness on the part of the protagonist that the attitude is unreasonable but neither protagonist nor narrator seem to be entirely aware of how strong the contrast is with Lucy's characteristic depression. The reader is aware that the protagonist is just as capable of reaching the point of suicidal despair as in the long vacation.

The point of view in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, the physical and temporal relationship between the reader and the protagonist, is not, as the autobiographical mode might suggest, simply retrospective with the implication of a considerable distance between the reader and the protagonist. The retrospective point of view is not even typical of these two carefully constructed novels. The effective physical point of view is directly behind the narrators as they experience the events of the novels; the apparent past tense is really what Kathleen Tillotson calls the just-after-present tense.<sup>8</sup> Rather than being continually aware of the narrators and their later position in time, the reader only notices them and shifts his point of view to theirs when they are summarizing material or addressing the reader directly. For the large amount of material dealing with the description and analysis of other characters, the narrators effectively reduce their awareness to the level of the protagonists. The remaining material, the protagonists' thoughts and feelings, their perceptions of scenic material, and what I have called pure scene, make the reader feel that he is witnessing the protagonists' experiences as they happen.

From the analysis of perspective it should be apparent that Brontë





was aware of the potential differences in reliability of the kinds of narrative material which she used. Scene is used to confirm the analyses of other characters which are a product, apparently, of the protagonist rather than the narrator. Thus, in one respect, the protagonist is infallible. The protagonist's attitudes, however, are sometimes subject to correction by the narrator, suggesting that the protagonist is not entirely infallible. Furthermore, the reader grasps from the behaviour of other characters, from the figurative language of the protagonist and from the larger pattern of the protagonist's behaviour a more complete understanding of her character than she possesses herself, at least during the major part of the novel. Brontë provides the means, then, through the manipulation of reliable and subjective material for the reader to discover for himself the complexity of the protagonist. As a result, there is, throughout each novel, a varying and often subtle distance between the reader and the protagonists of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, as they undergo the emotional experiences of their lives.



## CONCLUSION

Percy Lubbock's basic criticism of *Jane Eyre*, and novels like it, is that they interpose a narrator between the reader and the protagonist's mind. "Do not," he says, "let the hero come between us and his active mind, do not let the heroine stand in front of her emotions and portray them. . . ."1 The effect in *Jane Eyre* and in *Villette*, as this thesis shows, is surely not that simple; the major relationship is between the reader and the younger Jane or Lucy, not between the reader and the older women who narrate. The reader accepts, even needs, the occasional comment by the narrator in order to clarify the protagonist's attitude, but the narrator is anything but intrusive. It should be quite clear from the preceding chapters that the reader's feeling of direct access to the mind of the protagonist is rarely disrupted. The bulk of both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* is taken up with the protagonist's *perceptions* of events, of setting, of other characters, not with the narrator's *remembrance* of these things. As I have pointed out, even the analysis of other characters which one would expect to be presented to the reader by the narrator is undistinguishable from the immediate perceptions of the protagonist. With telling effect Brontë foregoes most opportunities to introduce the narrator's authoritative opinion. Lubbock says that the "centre of consciousness" tells his own story as it happens; despite the theoretical retrospective narrative, this is in fact the practical result in both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. Jane and Lucy recreate their own lives as they experienced them at the time, not as they appear from a distant point in time.





At the same time as Brontë displays her modernity by avoiding an intrusive narrator, she carefully avoids explicit characterization of the heroines. Even the technique of having other characters portray the protagonist is largely avoided. When it does occur it rarely tells the reader anything he could not have grasped for himself from other sources. Brontë concentrates on "showing" rather than "telling," which also suggests a sophistication not normally credited to her as a novelist. It is the heroines' responses to a range of carefully designed secondary characters which are fundamental to the reader's grasp of their characters. Because she has carefully ensured that the central characters will be infallible in their analyses of secondary characters, Brontë has provided a series of reliably portrayed characters whose function is to display the mind and character of the protagonist by the kind and force of their relationships with her.

In the process of avoiding "telling" or explicit statement, Brontë reveals a remarkable talent for evoking the protagonist's mood or state of mind. Much that would be insipid, if stated explicitly, achieves intensity by being merely suggested. Personification of emotions, dramatic metaphors, image patterns and evocative symbols add implicit dimensions to the characters of the heroines. Their extreme sensitivity, imaginative power, and emotional depth are never stated explicitly; these are given to the reader, fully and effectively, by the quality of the characters' reactions conveyed through figurative language and by the reflection of feeling and intuition in symbol. The degree of subjectivity in the protagonist's reactions is also conveyed to the reader by implication rather than by statement. Language, inconsistencies of behaviour and contrasts



between the protagonist's reactions and objective scene are used to suggest when the protagonist's actions and reactions are conditioned by the peculiarities of her personality. Charlotte Brontë, then, avoids most of the less effective means of characterization and artistically shapes what might have been the strict autobiographical form of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* to create complex characters, managing in the process to make the reader's relationships with her two heroines vital, subtle and dynamic.





## FOOTNOTES

### CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup>Crane, "The Concept of Plot", 620-621.

<sup>2</sup>Crane, 618.

<sup>3</sup>Crane, 618.

<sup>4</sup>Crane, 620-621.

<sup>5</sup>Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction*.

<sup>6</sup>Lubbock, 62.

<sup>7</sup>Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction", 1169.

<sup>8</sup>Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction*, 255.

<sup>9</sup>Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction", 1164.

<sup>10</sup>Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, especially 149-165.

<sup>11</sup>I am particularly indebted in the ensuing discussion of narrative point of view to Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* and Friedman's "Point of View in Fiction".

<sup>12</sup>See Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction*, especially Chapter XI for his analysis of point of view in *The Ambassadors*.

<sup>13</sup>Lubbock holds up drama as the goal towards which the novel should strive. He recognizes, certainly, that the seeming objectivity of drama is only the subjective view of the author disguised as seemingly spontaneous dialogue coming from independent people. What he regards as important is rather that the reader be unable to detect any overt evidence of the presence of another mind manipulating the activity of the novel. Story illusion is equivalent to dramatic intensity or immediacy, the highest expression of which could only be in a play.

<sup>14</sup>Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 153, see also Chapters VII, XI, XIII.



<sup>15</sup>Booth, 155-159.

<sup>16</sup>Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 151.

<sup>17</sup>Booth, 157.

## CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup>In the autobiographical novel, the reader has to deal with the central character in two different temporal relationships: with her as the older individual who is recreating her life story, and with her as the recreated earlier self, a character who may change over the course of the book. Since these two versions of the central character have often to be distinguished in the course of this thesis, and in order to avoid confusion, the story-teller will be referred to hereafter as the narrator, and the changing earlier version of the central character will be called the protagonist. The only exceptions to this rule will be an occasional reference to the "protagonist-narrator" or the "central character" when the distinction between the narrator and the protagonist is not important.

<sup>2</sup>All quotations from novels written by Charlotte Bronte will be taken from *The Shakespeare Head Bronte* and will be incorporated into the text as follows: title of novel, volume, and page number.

<sup>3</sup>Earl A. Knies has pointed out this problem in "The 'I' of *Jane Eyre*", 548, 553.

<sup>4</sup>Knies, "The 'I' of *Jane Eyre*", 553: "Much of [Jane's] characterization comes through Rochester, who constantly amazes Jane with his ability to read her thoughts."

<sup>5</sup>Although several critics have mentioned Bronte's use of foil characters no particular work has been done on the technique to the best of my knowledge. Among those who make passing reference are: Knies, "The 'I' of *Jane Eyre*", 553; Heilman, "Charlotte Bronte's 'New' Gothic"; and Colby, "*Villette* and the Life of the Mind".

<sup>6</sup>Heilman, "Charlotte Bronte's 'New' Gothic", 118-132.

<sup>7</sup>Colby, "*Villette* and the Life of the Mind", 413.

<sup>8</sup>Colby, 414.

<sup>9</sup>Colby, 415.





<sup>10</sup>Heilman, "Charlotte Bronte's 'New' Gothic", 120.

<sup>11</sup>Heilman, 122.

<sup>12</sup>Heilman, 122.

<sup>13</sup>Chase calls St. John "duty incarnate." Jane, he says, "cannot marry Rivers; she must purge her soul of the image of 'duty' as she has of the image of Bertha" (*The Brontes*", 494-495).

<sup>14</sup>Notably by Edwin Muir who claims that the resurrection of Rochester defeats the purpose of Jane's original rejection of him, which was to display the strength of her conscience (*The Structure of the Novel*, 50-51).

<sup>15</sup>Colby contrasts Ginevra, Paulina and Lucy, pointing out what the first two reveal about Lucy ("*Villette* and the Life of the Mind", 412).

<sup>16</sup>Colby, 416.

<sup>17</sup>In *The Life of Charlotte Bronte*, Mrs. Gaskell quotes a letter of Bronte's in which the author replies to a criticism of Lucy:

"You say that she may be thought morbid and weak, unless the history of her life be more fully given. I consider that she is both morbid and weak at times . . . ." (583).

<sup>18</sup>Watson, "Form and Substance in the Bronte Novels", 117.

<sup>19</sup>Colby, "*Villette* and the Life of the Mind", 416-17.

<sup>20</sup>Heilman, "Charlotte Bronte's 'New' Gothic", 129.

### CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup>There seem to be remarkably few studies of Charlotte Bronte's use of imagery. When they do appear as in Eric Solomon's "*Jane Eyre: Fire and Water*", or R. B. Heilman's "Charlotte Bronte's 'New' Gothic", they studiously avoid her frequent use of extended metaphors.

<sup>2</sup>Tompkins, "*Jane Eyre's 'Iron Shroud'*".

<sup>3</sup>Lucy's unconscious reactions to Vashti is noted by Colby in "*Villette* and the Life of the Mind" (414), and by Heilman in "Charlotte Bronte's 'New' Gothic" (130).



<sup>4</sup>Heilman, "Charlotte Bronte's 'New' Gothic", 121.

<sup>5</sup>Heilman, 129. Heilman calls the park scene "the most magnificent of all Charlotte's nocturnes: that vision of the 'moonlit, midnight park', the brilliance of the fete, the strange charm of places and people, recounted in a rhythmical, enchanted style (the 'Kubla Khan' mode) which at first reading gives the air of a dream mistaken for reality to what is in fact reality made like a dream."

<sup>6</sup>McCullough, *Representative English Novelists*, 182.

<sup>7</sup>Scargill, "All Passion Spent", 123, and Chase, "The Brontes", 493.

<sup>8</sup>Heilman calls the destruction of Thornfield a "fire of purgation" ("Charlotte Bronte's 'New' Gothic", 121).

<sup>9</sup>Solomon, "Jane Eyre: Fire and Water", 216.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>Solomon, 217.

<sup>12</sup>Varying interpretations of the moon have been offered. In contrast to Heilman's association of it with "feeling-imagination-intuition" ("Charlotte Bronte, Reason, and the Moon"), C. Burkhart (in "Bronte's *Villette*") suggests that it may reflect a conflict between chastity and a longing for love. Both seem to me to be refinements of Lucy's emotional conflict between love and self-denial and both attribute significance to the moon as a means to the end of characterization.

<sup>13</sup>Heilman, "Charlotte Bronte, Reason and the Moon", 288.

<sup>14</sup>Chase, "The Brontes", 498.

<sup>15</sup>McCullough, *Representative English Novelists*, 182.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup>The particular distinctions made in this chapter between kinds of narration are mine based on an analysis of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. I am particularly indebted, however, for the theory underlying these distinctions, to Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction"; Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* and Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction*.





<sup>2</sup>Romberg, *Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel*, 106:  
 ". . . it is the achievement of the epic paradox that both past time and present time manifest themselves to us as present time when we read the novel. All fiction becomes present to us, is in the present tense, while we are reading; and the tenses of reality acquire another meaning. . . . I would stress . . . that what is past time from the narrator's epic situation is not necessarily past time for the reader."

<sup>3</sup>Romberg, 32:  
 ". . . it is clear that the preterite form in the first-person novel can give just as intense a feeling of present time as in the novel of the third person. The decisive factor in this attitude to time is not so much the temporal forms, the tenses, but rather the actual narrative technique used in the telling of the story, that is to say, the fact that the presentation has a *scenic* quality."

<sup>4</sup>Shannon, "The Present Tense in *Jane Eyre*", 141-145.

<sup>5</sup>The italics are mine.

<sup>6</sup>Romberg, 107:  
 "It is evident that at the very moment that the narrator expressly emphasizes that what he is relating happened long ago, or when he embraces successive events in time and space in one sweeping review, the narrator counteracts in such cases any feeling of the 'here and now' that the reader may have."

<sup>7</sup>To that extent the narrators of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* seem to represent the "implied author".

<sup>8</sup>Tillotson, *Novelists of the Eighteen-Forties*, 298.

## CONCLUSION

<sup>1</sup>Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction*, 145.



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1. *MLR* - *Modern Language Review*
2. *NCF* - *Nineteenth Century Fiction*
3. *PMLA* - *Publications of the Modern Language Association*
4. *UTQ* - *University of Toronto Quarterly*

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